

**TOWARDS AN OUTCOMES-BASED POLICY  
EVALUATION FRAMEWORK IN SOUTH AFRICA**

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**...To God be the Glory!!!...**

**DECLARATION**

I declare that this work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced accordingly.

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**SGD MTHIYANE**

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**DATE**

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## ACRONYMS AND GLOSSARY OF TERMS

### Acronyms

ANC	African National Congress
AGSA	Auditor General .....
COGTA	Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs
DPSA	Department of Public Service and Administration
DSD	Department of Social Development
DHA	Department of Home Affairs
DOC	Department of Communications
DOE	Department of Education
DPW	Department of Public Works
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
DRDLR	Department of Rural Development and Land Reform
DWA	Department of Water
EBP	Evidence-Based Practice
GCIS	Government Communications and Information System
GWMES	Government Wide Monitoring and Evaluation
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MTEF	Medium Term Expenditure Framework
MTSF	Medium Term Strategic Framework
NSS	National Statistical System
NT	National Treasury
OECD	Organisation of Economic Co-Operation and Development
PALAMA	Public Administration Leadership and Management Academy
POA	Programme of Action
PSC	Public Service Commission
RBM&E	Results Based Monitoring and Evaluation
SA	South Africa
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

## Glossary of terms

Term	Definition	Source
<b><i>Evidence Base Practice</i></b>	Evidence-based practice refers to applying the best available research evidence in the provision of health, behavior, and education services to enhance outcomes.	Source
<b><i>Evaluation</i></b>	A periodic assessment of the relevance and performance of the project, and its impact.	Bamberger <sup>1</sup>
<b><i>Evaluation</i></b>	A time-bound exercise that attempts to assess systematically and objectively, the relevance, performance and success of ongoing and completed programs and projects.	THDP <sup>2</sup>
<b><i>Evaluation</i></b>	A time-bound exercise that attempts to assess systematically and objectively the relevance, performance and success of ongoing and completed programmes and projects. Evaluation can also address outcomes or other development issues. Evaluation is undertaken selectively to answer specific questions to guide decision-makers and/or programme managers, and to provide information on whether underlying theories and assumptions used in programme development were valid, what worked and what did not work and why. Evaluation commonly aims to determine relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. Evaluation is a vehicle for extracting cross-cutting lessons from operating unit experiences and determining the need for modifications to the <b>strategic results framework</b> . Evaluation should provide information that is credible and useful, enabling the incorporation of lessons learned into the decision-making process. See also “project evaluation” and “outcome evaluation”.	UNDP <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bamberger, M. & Hewitt, E. (1986), Monitoring and Evaluating Urban Development Programs: a Handbook for Program Managers and Researchers, Washington DC, World Bank

<sup>2</sup> TRACKING HUMAN DEVELOPMENT PROGRESS  
<http://thdp.undp.kg/index.html>

<sup>3</sup> H A N D B O O K O N M O N I T O R I N G A N D E V A L U A T I N G F O R R E S U L T S  
 UNDP Evaluation Office 2002  
[stone.undp.org/undpweb/ea/evalnet/docstore3/yellowbook/documents/full\\_draft.pdf](http://stone.undp.org/undpweb/ea/evalnet/docstore3/yellowbook/documents/full_draft.pdf)  
[www.undp.org/execution/word](http://www.undp.org/execution/word)



<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Source</b>
<b><i>Impact</i></b>	The overall and long-term effect of an intervention. Impact is the longer term or ultimate result attributable to a development intervention—in contrast to output and outcome, which reflect more immediate results from the intervention. The concept of impact is close to “development effectiveness”. Examples: higher standard of living, increased food security, increased earnings from exports, increased savings owing to a decrease in imports. See “results”.	UNDP
<b><i>Impacts</i></b>	Positive and negative, primary and secondary, long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.	OECD <sup>4</sup>
<b><i>Indicator</i></b>	The measure that is used to assess if an objective has been achieved, or what progress has been made.	Bamberger
<b><i>Indicator</i></b>	Signal that reveals progress (or lack thereof) towards objectives; means of measuring what actually happens against what has been planned in terms of quantity, quality and timeliness. An indicator is a quantitative or qualitative variable that provides a simple and reliable basis for assessing achievement, change or performance.	UNDP
<b><i>Indicator</i></b>	Quantitative or qualitative factor or variable that provides a simple and reliable means to measure achievement, to reflect the changes connected to an intervention.	OECD
<b><i>Inputs</i></b>	The financial, human, and material resources used for the development intervention.	OECD
<b><i>Logical Framework (logframe) Analysis</i></b>	The Logical Framework is a planning tool which presents answers to questions about the why, what, who where, when and how of a project in the form of a 4x4-matrix	
<b><i>Monitoring</i></b>	A continuing function that uses systematic collection of data on specified indicators to provide management and the main stakeholders of an ongoing development intervention with indications of the extent of progress and achievement of objectives and progress in the use of allocated funds	OECD

<sup>4</sup> OECD Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-Based Management (2002)  
[www.oecd.org/dataoecd/29/21/2754804.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/29/21/2754804.pdf)  
[www.oecd.org/dataoecd](http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd)

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Source</b>
<b><i>Monitoring</i></b>	An internal project management activity whose purpose is to ensure that the project achieves its defined objectives within a prescribed time frame and budget. Monitoring provides regular feedback on the progress of project implementation. It consists of operational and administrative activities that track resource acquisition and allocation, the production or the delivery of service, and cost records.	World Bank
<b><i>Outcome</i></b>	Actual or intended change in development conditions that interventions are seeking to support. It describes a change in development conditions between the completion of outputs and the achievement of impact. Examples: increased rice yield, increased income for the farmers. See —results”.	UNDP
<b><i>Outcome</i></b>	The likely or achieved short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention’s outputs. Related terms: result, outputs, impacts, effect.	OECD
<b><i>Outcomes</i></b>	The positive changes that result from the project’s intervention; achieved by the use of the project’s outputs.	Bamberger
<b><i>Outputs</i></b>	The services and products the project makes available to its target group; the use of the output leads to outcomes.	Bamberger
<b><i>Outputs</i></b>	Tangible products (including services) of a programme or project that are necessary to achieve the objectives of a programme or project. Outputs relate to the completion (rather than the conduct) of activities and are the type of results over which managers have a high degree of influence. Example: agricultural extension services provided to rice farmers. See —results”.	UNDP
<b><i>Outputs</i></b>	The products, capital, goods and services that result from a development intervention; may also include changes resulting from the intervention which are relevant to the achievement of outcomes.	OECD
<b><i>Results</i></b>	A broad term used to refer to the effects of a program or project. The terms outputs, outcomes and impacts describe more precisely the different types of results.	THDP
<b><i>Results-Based Management (RBM):</i></b>	A management strategy or approach by which an organisation ensures that its processes, products and services contribute to the achievement of clearly stated results. Results-based management provides a coherent framework for strategic planning and management by improving learning and accountability. It is also a broad management strategy aimed at achieving important changes in the way agencies operate, with improving performance and achieving results as the central orientation, by defining realistic expected results,	UNDP

Term	Definition	Source
	monitoring progress towards the achievement of expected results, integrating lessons learned into management decisions and reporting on performance.	
<b><i>Results-Based Management (RBM):</i></b>	A management strategy focusing on performance and achievement of outputs, outcomes and impacts. Related term: logical framework.	OECD
<b><i>Strategic results framework:</i></b>	As a generic term, the strategic results framework (SRF) represents the development hypothesis including those results necessary to achieve a strategic objective and their causal relationships and underlying assumptions. The framework establishes an organizing basis for measuring, analyzing and reporting results of the operating unit. It is also useful as a management tool and therefore focuses on the key results that must be monitored to indicate progress. It also may be the overall aims and objectives of a country's approach to development based on analysis of problems, and including a statement of priorities. For UNDP, the SRF is the document that describes the UNDP results for an operating unit in terms of outcomes, outputs, partnerships and indicators with specified Goals, Sub-goals and Strategic Areas of Support.	UNDP

## **ABSTRACT**

This is a qualitative research study undertaken to explore the extent to which Evidence based and Results based management approaches are being applied in SA in the area of public policy, with the aim of improving policy performance feedback. The orientation of this study was influenced by the problem statement which is stated in Chapter 1 as the general absence of reliable and appropriate performance information that is required to evaluate policy performance and gauge the impact of government's policy decisions.

Reviewed literature, in Chapter 2, shows that generation and utilisation of reliable performance information, to a large extent, depend on the effectiveness of an evaluation system that is outcomes-based and embedded in a functional evidence-based system. Thus chapter 2 attempts to explain processes (mechanisms and practices) that lead to the availability and utilisation of reliable and credible performance information. Chapter 2 assists the researcher to answer the secondary research question of this study; which is, does embedding a monitoring and evaluation system in an evidence-based system contribute to an outcomes-based and accountable government?

This study, though critical of the emerging policy evaluation framework in SA, acknowledges efforts made in the policy arena since 1994 (which is discussed in chapters 3). Thus, in identifying challenges, this study seeks to take a prospective approach that would outline the issues which government must grapple with in order to successfully institutionalise an outcomes based policy evaluation system. In this study institutionalisation of an outcomes-based policy evaluation system refers to the creation of a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system which produces monitoring information and evaluation findings which are judged valuable by key stakeholders, and are used in the pursuit of evidence-based decision making (Mackay 2006:5).

Based upon the findings of this study, the researcher concludes that the government has adopted a technocratic approach to monitoring and evaluation, paying little attention to the broader institutional and systemic issues. At the core of the matter is an under-emphasis of the political influence on the effectiveness of the evaluation systems. This study further argues that even the recent public reforms, driven through the newly established Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Ministry, continue to advocate for this technocratic approach with little or no consideration of the political environment within which evaluations are supposed to be executed.

Therefore the researcher recommends that in order to institutionalise the Outcomes-Based policy evaluation system, interventions should be made at different levels; that is, political and administrative levels. Political interventions would entail reforming the current electoral system, and strengthening the role and capacity of parliamentary organs. On the other hand, administrative interventions would entail accelerating differentiated evaluation support programmes, strengthening financial accountability and budget allocation mechanisms.

This study found that, despite government's much publicised intentions of implementing an outcomes-based approach through the GWM&ES, most government departments are far from implementing outcomes-based policy evaluation systems. Evaluation culture is weak and, if done, evaluations only occasionally inform strategic directions of the departments. This in turn discourages departments from conducting evaluations. The extent to which departments have applied the GWM&ES is the subject of this research. Chapters 3 and 4 address this matter and thus assist the researcher to answer the main research question of this study; which is, what strides have been made by SA towards an outcomes-based policy evaluation framework – —“Where are we” and what are the gaps?

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

Since 1994, South Africa has experienced the policy cycle in a fast-forward mode due to the transition phase from the apartheid era. As a result, policy design, legislation and policy implementation have proceeded rapidly in all sectors. This transition meant that many of the policies that were inherited from the apartheid era were inappropriate for the democratic dispensation. To this effect Roux (2002:420) notes that constitutional reform has led to change and transformation in almost all spheres of government and administration. Such changes affected virtually all the functional fields of government, and consequently redefined the role of policy and decision-makers. Echoing this sentiment Brynard (2005:3) states that an extraordinary degree of intellectual and political energy was harnessed to generate public policies that would suit the current needs of the State. South Africa, in a policy context, went through a major review of policies especially between 1995 and 1996; Brynard (2005:3) terms this period the 'White Study Era'.

In echoing Brynard's (2005) observation, the Presidency (2007:5) posits that the first democratic government's term of office was concerned primarily with the fundamental restructuring of the apartheid state into a modern public service. The second term was concerned with coordination and integration of government systems and services. The third term had a number of strategic priorities but key amongst these has been the challenge of increasing effectiveness, so that a greater developmental impact is achieved. One of the ways Government is increasing effectiveness is by concentrating on monitoring and evaluation. This is because it is a pivotal competence that has positive effects both up and downstream: it improves policies, strategies and plans as well as improving performance and optimising impact (Presidency 2007:5).

It is against this background that this study focuses on the impact of the strategic intervention of the government's third term: policy evaluation. Goldfrank (1998:1) highlights the importance of looking beyond the euphoria that comes with the installation of new governments when assessing such government's performance. He contends that, in studying the relatively recently democratised countries, scholars have largely moved beyond the theme of transitions to democratically-elected governments and have begun to ask questions regarding the kind of democracies that have arisen and how to sustain democratic practices. Almost uniformly, political analysts and actors deplore the quality of the new democracies, pointing to one or another deficiency, including ineffective legislatures, inefficient public bureaucracies, corrupt

judiciaries, and, perhaps most strikingly governments' inability to deliver their mandates (Goldfrank 1998:1).

This study, though critical of the emerging policy evaluation framework in SA, acknowledges the efforts made in the policy arena since 1994. This study seeks to take a prospective approach that would outline the issues which government must grapple with in order to successfully institutionalise an outcomes-based policy evaluation system.

## **1.2 Research Problem**

After sixteen years of policy implementation, questions on whether or not such policies are delivering the intended outcomes are continuously being raised by different stakeholders including the government and the ruling party, African National Congress (ANC). Since its landmark victory in 1994, the ANC government has introduced several policies with the aim of improving the living conditions of the South Africans. As a result the structures, institutions, and processes of government have been largely reinvented and reconstructed. Apartheid institutions have been dismantled or re-engineered, transformation processes have been instigated, and the public service has been overhauled and reformed in various aspects. However, each of these innovations and changes has encountered obstacles, some expected and some unforeseen. Thus, the capability of government to implement its programmes has varied enormously, and their impact has varied accordingly (Camay and Gordon 2004:313).

Given the magnitude of this change, it is not surprising that the ANC is concerned about the inability of government's systems to objectively determine the extent to which the implemented policies are adding value to the lives of the previously disadvantaged communities. The ANC affirms this concern in its 2002 Strategy and Tactics document where it argues that, "...policy leadership responsibility is compromised by the general absence of reliable and appropriate information that will evaluate policy performance and the impact of government policy decisions". Where there is information available it is compiled and communicated by those responsible for implementation, which raises the question as to the reliability and validity of the evidence that is being presented to the Executive, Parliament and the ruling party (ANC 2002:9).

Schacter (1993:1) is very accurate in his diagnosis of this problem, the absence of reliable and appropriate performance information, when he contends that public sector performance has often been measured in terms of what the government has done, meaning an amount of funding

provided, number of kilometers of road tarred, number of new hospital beds and so forth. Such measures focus on how “~~busy~~” the government has been rather than on what it has achieved. Government highlights the means rather than the ends.

Schacter (1999:1) further argues that this is not to say that keeping track of means, as opposed to ends isn't important. Governments need to measure how much they spend and “do”. But when performance measurement focuses too heavily or exclusively on how much is spent – “~~inputs~~” – or done – “~~outputs~~” -- as opposed to impact on society -- “~~outcomes~~” -- the result is often that public sector organisations lose sight of why they were created in the first place. Public organisations may be very “~~busy~~” but be accomplishing little from society's perspective. For example, it would be futile for the Department of Transport to build thousands of kilometers of roads to places where no one travels. The danger of this approach, as noted by Radebe and Pierre (2007:110) is that organisations take their own implementation decisions which may not be in line with national priorities. One of the consequences of the apparent absence of strategic leadership was pointed out as inappropriate infrastructure developments such as building new parking facilities at Durban International Airport while the airport would be decommissioned in 2009.

Therefore, a paradigm shift in public sector performance measurement regime is paramount if governments are to be successful in generating reliable and appropriate performance information. Such a shift would entail objective generation and utilisation of performance information on what government departments are busy with (interventions such as policies, programmes and projects) and what results are being achieved by such interventions. An outcomes approach to planning, monitoring and evaluation would be advocated in this study as part of the solution towards the generation and utilisation of reliable and appropriate performance information.

### **1.3 The purpose of the Study and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study is to explore the extent to which Evidence based and Results based management approaches are being applied in SA in the area of public policy with the aim of improving policy performance feedback (performance information or evidence of whether policies are successful or not and evidence for future policy decisions). In order to achieve this purpose the researcher would be guided by two main research questions. The main question to be addressed is: What strides have been made by SA towards an outcomes-based policy evaluation framework – “Where are we” and what are the gaps? To this end, Scott, Joubert and Anyogu (2006:87) argue that SA government needs to be able to determine whether government



policies, interpreted into government programmes and projects, are causally linked to policy outcomes. We need to be able to determine whether progress, or lack of it, is due to (or happening despite) government policies and activities. Thus this study would carefully examine the extent to which the South African government is able to objectively report on the performance of its policy interventions and also whether policy evaluation findings are utilised to improve future policy interventions.

The secondary question to be addressed is: Does embedding a monitoring and evaluation system in an evidence-based system contribute to an outcomes-based and accountable government? The researcher would contend that a government that bases its policy decisions on scientific evidence enhances its chances not only of implementing sound policies but also of executing effective performance evaluation of its policies; thereby, laying a strong foundation for objectively generating reliable and appropriate performance information.

#### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

This study has three main objectives:

Firstly, the study aims to examine the extent to which departments comply with the Government-wide Policy Framework on Monitoring and Evaluation which was published by government in 2007; this is an overarching policy framework that ushers a new culture on monitoring and evaluation and is predicated on a RBM approach (Presidency 2007:1). Secondly, the study aims to assess the manner in which government departments generate and use evidence throughout the policy lifecycle (policy making, policy implementation and policy evaluation). Thirdly, the study aims to assess the impact of the existing accountability mechanisms on the utilisation of scientifically generated evidence in government.

#### **1.5 Theoretical Framework**

This study moves from the premise that if policies are based on tested theories (theories that have been subjected to vigorous scientific procedures); examination of their performance during and after implementation is made easy. Subsequently, evidence of whether policies work or not would be feedback to the initial phase of policy formulation for policy redesign where necessary. This is premised on the fact that public policies are not eternal truths but rather hypotheses subject to alteration and to devising of new and better ones until these in turn are proved unsatisfactory (Wildavsky 1979:16). Two strategic levers or catalysts that enhance a dynamic relationship between policy making and implementation variables are explored in this study. These strategic levers improve generation and use of performance information throughout

the policy lifecycle. They are Evidence-Based Policy Making and Results-Based Management approaches.

Evidence-Based Policy Making approach finds its expression through policy science which can be summarised as the intersection between scientific research and public policy. Davies (as cited in Segone 2008:27) defines evidence-based policy as an approach which helps people make well informed decisions about policies, programmes and projects by putting the best available evidence at the heart of policy development and implementation. Segone (2008:27) points out that this definition matches that of the UN in the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) guide where it is stated that —Evidence-based policy making refers to a policy process that helps planners make better-informed decisions by putting the best available evidence at the centre of the policy process”. The extent to which government departments put the best available evidence at the centre of policy process would be examined in this study.

On the other hand, Results-Based Management (RBM) is defined as a management strategy or approach by which an organisation ensures that its processes, products and services contribute to the achievement of clearly stated results. RBM provides a coherent framework for strategic planning and management by improving learning and accountability. It is also a broad management strategy aimed at achieving important changes in the way agencies operate, with improving performance and achieving results as the central orientation, by defining realistic expected results, monitoring progress toward the achievement of expected results, integrating lessons learned into management decisions and reporting on performance (United Nations Development Programme 2002:10).

Scott *et al.* (2006:11) add that RBM is a management strategy or approach by which an organisation ensures that its processes, products and services contribute to the achievement of clearly stated results. RBM provides a coherent framework for strategic planning and management by improving learning and accountability. It is also a broad management strategy aimed at achieving important changes in the way agencies operate, with improving performance and achieving results as the central orientation, by defining realistic expected results, monitoring progress towards the achievement of expected results, integrating lessons learned into management decisions and reporting on performance.

What distinguishes an outcomes-based M&E approach that is embedded in an evidence-based system from other approaches is its inclination towards objectively or independently generation

and utilisation of reliable and appropriate performance information. Unlike political ideology or religious beliefs, proof [in an outcomes and evidence based performance system] is not a matter of faith; nor is it a matter of logic or the rationality of an argument alone. It requires corroboration by empirical evidence collected, analysed and reported to the highest standards. What qualifies as evidence might vary between styles of research, but the need for research to verify its claims with reference to empirical evidence remains constant (Denscombe 2002:197).

## **1.6 Research Design**

Becker and Bryman (2004:186) define a research design as a structure or framework within which data are collected. The function of a research design is therefore to ensure that the evidence obtained enables researchers to answer research questions as unambiguously as possible. Thus a research design is selected for its capacity to answer the research questions that drive an investigation. This study is based on a qualitative research design and is located within the policy evaluation field of study, policy research. A policy oriented research has been used to refer to research design to inform or understand one or more aspects of the public and social policy process, including decision making and policy formulation, implementation and evaluation (Becker and Bryman 2004:15).

A qualitative research methodology has been chosen because of its approach towards finding the truth which bodes very well with the requirements of this study. That is, the approach taken by qualitative researchers typically involves an inductive approach to the relationship between theory and research. An inductive approach entails generating concepts and theory out of data rather than the quantitative research approach in which concepts and theoretical ideas guide the collection of data (Becker and Bryman 2004:248). However, Medawar 1984 (as cited in Becker and Bryman 2004:78) contends that researchers seldom, if ever, start their enquiries with a clean slate. They begin with a review of the relevant literature and some provisional ideas, or hypotheses, about the subject they wish to investigate.

The research presented in this thesis was undertaken to answer the fundamental question regarding the role played by an outcomes-based policy evaluation system and evidence-based system in improving policy performance information:

1. The main research question of the study is: What strides have been made by the South African government towards an outcomes-based policy evaluation framework – “Where are we” and what are the gaps?

2. In order to understand conditions under which an outcomes-based M&E systems strive, a secondary research question is asked: Does embedding a monitoring and evaluation system in an evidence-based system contribute to an outcomes-based and accountable government?

In order to answer these two questions, a conceptual framework was developed which is thoroughly grounded in the literature review (Chapter 2). This conceptual framework is made up of three main dimensions:

- Policies that are based on sound theories and supported by rigorous/scientific research (evidence-based approach), improve chances of designing and implementing a policy evaluation framework.
- For this evaluation framework to be effective (that is, to be able to produce reliable and usable performance information), it must adhere to a Results-based Management approach. In this context, the task of evaluation is to produce improvement, accountability and knowledge findings about the policies.
- In addition, the independence and enforceability of checks and balances across the accountability framework was explicitly incorporated into the research as this is an issue that has been acknowledged to have a significant influence on the successful implementation of an outcomes-based policy evaluation system in government.

For the purposes of this study, a three-phase research strategy was adopted that consisted of: literature review, fieldwork research interviews with a sample of 40 government policy and evaluation practitioners; and data analysis strategy. The first strategy involves reviewing of relevant literature. In this section, the researcher reviews literature that explains sources of poor performance information. The focus is also on different instruments that must be institutionalised in order to improve quality of performance information as well as to improve its utilisation. The presentation of the literature review is organised thematically and chronologically. The first part of the literature review, chapter 2, deals with key perspectives advocated by different scholars on what causes poor performance information and on how to improve it.

The second part of literature review, chapter 3, is largely chronological, though still maintaining the thematic organisation of the first section. This is mainly because the focus of this section is on the historical progression of the policy evaluation system in the South African government. This approach to literature review is also supported by a University of North Carolina report on —How to write a literature review” (1998:5) which argues that thematic reviews of literature are

organised around a topic or issue, rather than the progression of time. However, progression of time may still be an important factor in a thematic review.

The researcher would use literature review to achieve three objectives. Firstly, this study will examine literature on the application of evidence-based and RBM approaches in order to construct a conceptual framework for the study. Secondly, the study will identify themes emanating from the literature; these themes lay a foundation for the analysis framework. Thirdly, the study, in chapter three, examines strides that have been made by the SA government towards an outcomes based policy evaluation framework. The focus will be more on the official government documents and reports that set the scene for an outcomes-based approach in government.

The second strategy entails fieldwork interviews. Interviewing is a primary mode of data collection in qualitative research; semi-structured and unstructured interviews are labels used to describe two types of interview. For the purpose of this study, the interview was conducted using a semi-structured interview schedule that had been developed for the purpose of the study. Annexure A enlists all the questions that were posed to all the interviewees. The researcher only took extensive notes during the interviews and no other device (like tape recorders) was used. Electronic recording was decided against since it has a potential of discouraging other participants from fully expressing their views. Thus Rubin (2005:110) argues that some interviewees become shy or hesitant when they know they are being electronically recorded. Though solely relying on notes taken during the interview was risky but it helped the researcher to pay attention to what the interviewees were saying.

The nature of the study required experts focused input which led to the stratification of the sample. Thus the study used a non-probability sampling technique (judgmental sample). The sample consisted of policy and evaluation practitioners. All of the interviewees were chosen based on their experience and knowledge of the public sector, especially knowledge of policy and evaluation practice in government. Interviews were conducted with 40 participants from various national departments to ascertain how their departments performed in relation to the main research question; which is what strides have been made by the South African Government towards an outcomes-based policy evaluation framework. National departments were chosen simply because of their constitutional responsibility, which is to develop policies and account to parliament on the performance of the implemented policies. These departments were selected through the convenience sampling method. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where subjects are selected because of their convenient

accessibility and proximity to the researcher (Experiment-resources.com 2008:1)

The 40 interviewees that participated in this study came from the following national departments: 5 from the Presidency, 5 from the Department of Social Development (DSD), 5 from National Treasury (NT), 4 from the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA), 4 from the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA), 3 from the Department of Home Affairs (DHA), 3 from the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), 2 from the Public Administration Leadership and Management Academy (PALAMA), 2 from the Department of Water Affairs (DWA), 2 from the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR), 1 from the Department of Communications (DOC), 1 from Department of Basic Education (DBE), 1 from the Department of Public Works (DPW), 1 from the Government Communications and Information System (GCIS), and 1 from the Office of the Public Service Commission (OPSC). Annexure B enlists all the departments and corresponding number of interviewees.

The third strategy entails data analysis. This study employs a spiral model together with the memo writing approach in analysing the findings. The idea behind this strategy is to read carefully through the data and to uncover the major categories and concepts and ultimately the properties of these categories and their interrelationships. Unlike quantitative approaches whereby the researcher has a preconceived set of steps to follow in a linear (vertical) path through each phase of the research process; qualitative approaches are mainly inductive and follow what is termed a spiral model of research design. A spiral design, employed by qualitative researchers, allows the investigator to, metaphorically, drive in and out of the data. In this model a researcher generates new understandings, with varied levels of specificity (Hesse-Biber and Leavey 2006:289). This study is not based on a preconceived set of steps and codes but themes and codes are generated along literature review.

Karp (as cited in Hesse-Biber and Leavey 2006:349).notes that after pondering the ideas in the memos and coding interviews – when you think you have been able to “~~g~~ab onto a theme” – it is time to begin what he terms “~~the~~ memo”. By this he means a memo that integrates the theme with data and any available literature that fits; something that begins to look like a paper. Memo writing assists the researcher in elaborating on the ideas regarding data and code categories. Coding involves extracting meaning from non-numerical data such as text and multimedia such as audio and video. Coding is the analysis strategy many qualitative researchers employ in order to help them locate key themes, patterns, ideas, and concepts that may exist within their data.

As the process of analysis continues the researcher begins to see more developed codes – focused codes especially through the process of writing memos. By writing memos one can raise a code to the level of a category as it would be shown in the analysis section of this study. In chapter 4 the researcher discusses and compares the empirical findings, as induced from the interviews, with what other studies have already discovered (as discussed in Chapter 2). The focus also is on interpreting the information provided by the interviewees and relate it to the main objectives of the study. Chapter 5, which deals with the main findings and recommendations of the study, is mainly based on chapter 4.

### **1.7 Importance of the Study**

Even though the focus of this study is on performance evaluation, it ultimately addresses a very critical issue of an accountable government. Thus the researcher will also argue that a performance evaluation system should enable the government to account to its citizens about the effectiveness and efficiency of its policies and use of resources. This study will thus contribute to the growing body of knowledge of policy making and performance evaluation in the South African literature, which aims at strengthening the accountability mechanisms of government.

### **1.8 Summary of Literature Review**

The second chapter of this study focuses on the evolution of the policy analysis with specific focus on policy making and evaluation as well as on the progress made by SA towards an outcomes-based policy evaluation framework. A brief outline of some of the sections covered in the literature is provided below:

#### **1.8.1 Role of theories in policy making**

While policy could be defined in several ways, the point of departure for this study is that policy is viewed as a theory. The proposition of this study is that theories that underlie policies must be backed up by scientific evidence so that measures of success for policy performance would be effective. This proposition is backed up by scholars such as Pressman and Wildavsky (1973, 1979 and 1984), Bardach (1977) and more recently by Pawson (2002). For instance, Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) described any policy as a ‘hypothesis’ containing initial conditions and predicted consequences. That is, the typical reasoning of the policy-maker is along the lines of ‘if x is done at time t(1) then y will result at time t(2)’. Hill (1998) concludes that thus every policy incorporates a theory of cause and effect (normally unstated in practice) and, if the policy fails, it may be the underlying theory that is at fault rather than the execution of the policy.

### **1.8.2 Role of Evidence in Policy Making**

As stated above, the proposition of this study is that theories that underlie policies must be backed up by scientific evidence so that measures of success for policy performance would be effective. This view is supported by scholars such as Davies (1999, 2003), Nutley (2003) and Segone (2008). Arguments presented by these scholars are discussed in detail in chapter two, which is the literature review chapter. These scholars concur in that evidence-based decision making draws heavily upon the findings of scientific research, including social scientific research that has been gathered and critically appraised according to explicit and sound principles of scientific inquiry.

### **1.8.3 Framework for an accountable and learning Government**

Different scholars contend that there is a growing interest in performance measurement or evaluation in the public sector. The question is: what drives this interest in performance measurement and evaluation in the public sector? It is this question that has motivated the researcher to embark on this study. In answering this question Schacter (2002:5) argues that the fundamental reason why performance measurement matters to us is that it makes accountability possible, and accountability goes to the heart of our system of political governance. Schacter further contends that citizens grant their governments a high degree of control over their lives. Citizens allow governments to take part of their income through taxes for instance, and to limit their freedom through enforcement of laws and regulations. In return citizens expect their governments to be accountable to them for the ways in which they exercise power.

Performance evaluation is not only beneficial to citizens but to government as well. A government that utilises findings on the performance of its policies is able to improve on new policies as well as on the implementation of such policies. Wildavsky (1984:255) echoes this point when he contends that learning evaluation strives to unearth faulty assumptions, reshape misshapen policy designs, and continuously refine goals in light of new information derived during implementation.

### **1.8.4 Previous research on Policy Management in SA**

Literature reviewed indicates that, conceptually and regulatory, a significant amount of work has been done on policy making and evaluation in SA. Key topics covered in the reviewed literature include transition from apartheid to democratic era, Public policy making in a post-apartheid South Africa, policy evaluation, Electoral system and political accountability. These



topics are addressed in chapter 3 where the researcher discusses the work of scholars like Van Niekerk, Van Der Waldt and Jonker (2001) Roux (2002), Cloete and Wissink (2004), Scott *et al.* (2006 and 2007), Radebe and Pierre (2007), Christo de Coning (2008), Gumede (2008), Carter (2008). Government reports, covering framework and performance documents, are also used in this study to present the side of government.

Notwithstanding the existence of literature on policy making and evaluation, more work is still needed on how an evidence-based approach improves policy performance as well as the quality of performance information. Thus this study explores the manner in which an evidence-based system contributes to an outcomes-based and accountable government. The study takes a prospective approach that would outline the issues which government must grapple with in order to successfully institutionalise an outcomes based policy evaluation system.

Based upon the findings of this study, the researcher concludes that the government has adopted a technocratic approach to monitoring and evaluation, paying little attention to the broader institutional and systemic issues. At the core of the matter is an under-emphasis by government, of the political influence on the effectiveness of the evaluation systems.

Therefore this study recommends that in order to institutionalise the Outcomes-Based policy evaluation system, interventions should be made at different levels; that is, political and administrative levels. Political interventions would entail reforming the current electoral system, and strengthening the role and capacity of parliamentary organs. On the other hand, administrative interventions would entail strengthening financial accountability and budget allocation mechanisms, and application of the GWM&ES principles by departments.

### **1.9 Limitations of the Study**

This study will not venture to quantifiably assess the extent to which the introduction of Evidence-Based Policy Making and Results-Based Management approaches have improved policy performance feedback in SA. Such an enquiry will require more time and a different strategy; this will be a subject for further research. Nevertheless, this study explores scholarly literature with the aim of identifying main arguments on how policy evaluation could be improved. Themes emanating from the literature are then tested through an interview with a sample of policy and evaluation practitioners.

The other limitation of this study is that, no matter how relevant it may be, it does not represent the official position of government. Hence there is no guarantee for the implementation of the

recommendations of this study. The timeframe as well as the financial resources will limit the researcher from doing an in-depth analysis of key themes emanating from literature.

Lastly, the assessment of policy evaluation practices in government in this study is based on the views of public servants; probably the picture would be different if outsiders (academics or consultants who have done policy work with government) were factored in, which, admittedly, is a different research project for later. Such a project would be designed for both policy implementation and impact simultaneously, a conceptually complex exercise perhaps proper for the PhD that comes after this.

### **1.10 Chapter Outline**

**Abstract:** This section presents an overview of the study and introduces contents of each chapter.

**Chapter one:** This chapter presents a background to the study, the purpose and objectives of the study, theoretical framework as well as research design. It provides the reader with the research methodology that has been employed in search of the answers to the research questions. It also presents a brief summary of literature review.

**Chapter two:** This chapter reviews literature that is already available on the evolution of the policy analysis with specific focus on policy making and evaluation. Key themes for an effective policy performance evaluation framework will also be identified in this chapter.

**Chapter three:** This chapter examines strides that have been made by the SA government towards a (evidence-outcomes based framework as espoused in chapter two) policy performance evaluation framework

**Chapter four:** This chapter provides analysis and interpretation of the research findings based on the reviewed literature and interview outcomes. The purpose of this chapter is to present solid descriptive data and to lead the reader to understand the meaning of the phenomenon that is being studied. A spiral model analysis approach and memo writing approach are utilised to analyse and interpret the findings of the study.

**Chapter five:** This chapter presents main findings and recommendations that have been drawn from the reviewed literature, constructed theoretical framework, as well as the interview results.

### **1.11 Conclusion**

This study explores if embedding an M&E system in an evidence-based system contributes to an outcomes-based and accountable government. It also assesses elements of an outcomes-based and accountable government by studying the South African scenario. The researcher uses evidence emanating from literature and interviews to make a statement on the nature of the evaluation system that has emerged in South Africa.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

In chapter one the problem statement was introduced as the general absence of reliable and appropriate performance information required to evaluate policy performance and gauge the impact of government's policy decisions. Thus this chapter reviews literature that attempt to explain processes that lead to the availability and usability of reliable and credible performance information throughout the policy lifecycle. Scholars advance different perspectives on why governments struggle to design and build a reporting system that can produce trustworthy, timely, and relevant information on the performance of their projects, programs, and policies (Kusek and Rist 2004:21).

However, an outcomes-based (results-based) approach would be used in this study to explain how utilisable performance information could be objectively generated. An Outcomes-based Policy Evaluation approach, which is also advocated by the government of SA through a GWM&E system, is presented in this study as one of the key tools through which governments could use to objectively demonstrate achievements and, thus, account about the performance of their policies.

An outcome-based evaluation (OBE) encompasses the central question of what programs ought to achieve for persons receiving them. It also encompasses what outcome-based evaluation players (promoters, stakeholders, and program evaluators) are requesting of education, health care, and social service programmes. These two questions provide the basis for the definition of an OBE approach: A type of evaluation that uses person and organisation-referenced outcomes to determine current and desired person and program-referenced outcomes and their use (program evaluation), the extent to which a program meets its goals and objectives (effectiveness evaluation), whether a program made a difference compared to either no program or an alternative program (impact evaluation), or the equity, efficiency or effectiveness of policy outcomes (Schalock 2001:6).

A similar view is shared by Schorr (1997:115) who posits that most legislators want to know what works when they vote on laws and appropriations; parents want to know how well their children are being educated; foundations want to know about the impact of their support; and the staff of social programs want to know how effective they are. As a result, improving the ability to

judge the success of agencies and programs in achieving agreed-upon outcomes is becoming a major reform strategy. Expanding on the elements of the OBE Schalock (2001:7), writes that [social programs] are confronted with two evaluation needs: to demonstrate increased accountability and continuous improvement. From a management perspective, these needs equate to managing for results, quality, and valued customer-referenced outcomes.

It is worth noting that the proposition of this study is that for an outcomes-based approach to be successful it must be embedded in an evidence based system. This is because the researcher holds the view that the extent to which a government adheres to the use of scientifically generated evidence is an important indicator of whether its commitment to an outcomes-based evaluation system will succeed or not. Thus, in this study, the researcher argues that an evidence-based system is a prerequisite for a successful implementation of an outcomes based policy evaluation system; it is a cornerstone for an outcomes-based policy evaluation system. This research has had to combine two fields of study in order to construct a conceptual framework for this study. Therefore, the conceptual framework was developed by linking relevant theories from the perspectives of both the results-based management and evidence-based approach (EBA) literatures. Therefore the conceptual framework is based on these two blocks; RBM and EBA.

The first block, RBM, is defined as a management strategy aimed at achieving important changes in the way organisations operate, with improving performance in terms of results as the central orientation. RBM provides the management framework and tools for strategic planning, risk management, performance monitoring and evaluation. Its primary purpose is to improve efficiency and effectiveness through organisational learning, and secondly to fulfill accountability obligations through performance reporting. Key to its success is the involvement of stakeholders throughout the management lifecycle in defining realistic expected results, assessing risk, monitoring progress, reporting on performance and integrating lessons learned into management decisions (Meier 2003:6).

Reviewed literature shows that application of the RBM approach at policy level is, however, not without resistance. For instance, Schacter (2002:2) argues that although RBM is on its way to becoming embedded in the [public service] management culture, a significant gap remains. Public sector managers remain less comfortable in applying the principles of RBM to policies than to programs. On the other hand, the second block, EBA, is defined as an approach which helps

people make well informed decisions about policies, programmes and projects by putting the best available evidence at the heart of policy development and implementation (Davies as cited by Segone 2008:27). Evidence based approach stands in contrast to opinion-based policy, which relies heavily on either the selective use of evidence (e.g. on single studies irrespective of quality) or on the untested views of individuals or groups, often inspired by ideological standpoints, prejudices, or speculative conjecture (Segone 2008:27).

This chapter is framed around key thematic issues: namely; defining a policy lifecycle, attributes of performance information, embedding an evidence-based system and Institutionalising an Outcome-Based Policy Evaluation System. The remaining part of this chapter is devoted to these outlined issues.

## **2.2 Defining a Policy Lifecycle**

### **2.2.1 The policy Context**

This study is mainly concerned with policy evaluation; however, it is important to briefly discuss other policy processes in order to give a context within which policy evaluation takes place. In tackling this subject Mbanga (2006:49) argues that studies of policy processes are concerned with how policies are actually made in terms of actions taken by various actors at each stage. Thus all governments are judged by how well they deliver results – whether they leave children better educated, trains more punctual, the population healthier. To this end, Mbanga (2006:49) argues that the business of government is to make choices and to strategically manage resources towards achieving the intended goals. Thus it is important for government to put into place mechanisms for assessing whether its efforts are adding any value to the lives of people.

Answering a question of what policy is De Coning (2000:11) writes that there is no universally accepted definition of policy, theory or model that exists. However, an adequate framework of definitions enables one to explore the multidimensional nature of policy, to establish the key elements of definitions in the field and to develop a working definition. De Coning provides the following definitions for the purposes of broadening understanding of what policy is:

- Raney (1968:7) defines policy as —a declaration and implementation of intent”.
- Easton (1953:129) defines policy as —the authoritative allocation through the political process of values to groups or individuals in the society”.

- Hanekom (1987:7) states that policy-making is the activity preceding the publication of a goal, while a policy statement is the making known, the formal articulation, the declaration of intent or the publication of the goal to be pursued. Policy is thus indicative of a goal, a specific purpose, a programme of action that has been decided upon. Public policy is therefore a formal articulated goal that the legislator intends pursuing with society or with a social group”.
- Dye (1978:4-5) defines policy as a comprehensive framework of and/or interaction”.
- Starling (1979:4) defines policy as —kind of guide that delimits actions”.
- Baker *et al.* (1975:12-15) defines policy as —amechanism employed to realise social goals and to allocate resources”.
- Bourn J (2001:1) posits that policy is the translation of government's political priorities and principles into programmes and courses of action to deliver desired changes.
- Schnell (2003:5) defines public policy as a course of action, authorised by government, to achieve certain goals. Such a course of action may take many forms. It could, for example, take the form of a law, a strategy or a programme. Even a speech made by a president or a minister could outline a government’s planned course of action.

Though all of the above definitions are relevant to understanding key features of a policy; however, greater emphasis in this study is put on the role of theory in policy making.

Reviewed literature shows that the policy process that leads to the endorsement of a policy is a complex set of events that determine what actions governments would take, and what effects those actions would have on social conditions. In the making of choices and marshalling of available resources to realise the intended goals, an elaborate process has to be followed. This process has to be understood and well-managed. If this process is not properly managed, policies could either never be formulated or could become little more than novel statements of intent which are never implemented (Heymans as quoted in Mbanga 2006:49). Therefore a viable system of policy management should include a series of interlinked activities constituting the functions of policy formulation, implementation and evaluation, which are performed through an elaborate institutional and organisational framework (Mbanga 2006:49).

### **2.2.2 Theory and Policy-making**

The point of departure for this study is that all policies or social programs are theories. They begin in the heads of the policy makers, and pass through the hands of program practitioners, and

if all goes well, they are driven into the hearts and minds of the subjects of the intervention (Pawson 2002:2). Hence, this study argues that where underlying theories are not clearly articulated, measuring performance or even the impact of these policies is almost impossible. Thus, a credible evidence-based system is critical for unpacking and supporting underlying theories.

Reiterating the importance of theories, Chen (1990) and Weiss (1995) (as cited in Anderson 2002:18) argue that social programmes are based upon explicit or implicit theories about how and why the programme will work. [Thus] the task of evaluation is to surface those theories, identify the key assumptions and test their validity. This view is also confirmed by Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) when they describe any policy as a ‘hypothesis’ containing initial conditions and predicted consequences. That is, the typical reasoning of the policy-maker is along the lines of ‘if x is done at time t(1) then y will result at time t(2)’. Cohen and Hill (1998) conclude that thus every policy incorporates a theory of cause and effect (normally unstated in practice) and, if the policy fails, it may be the underlying theory that is at fault rather than the execution of the policy.

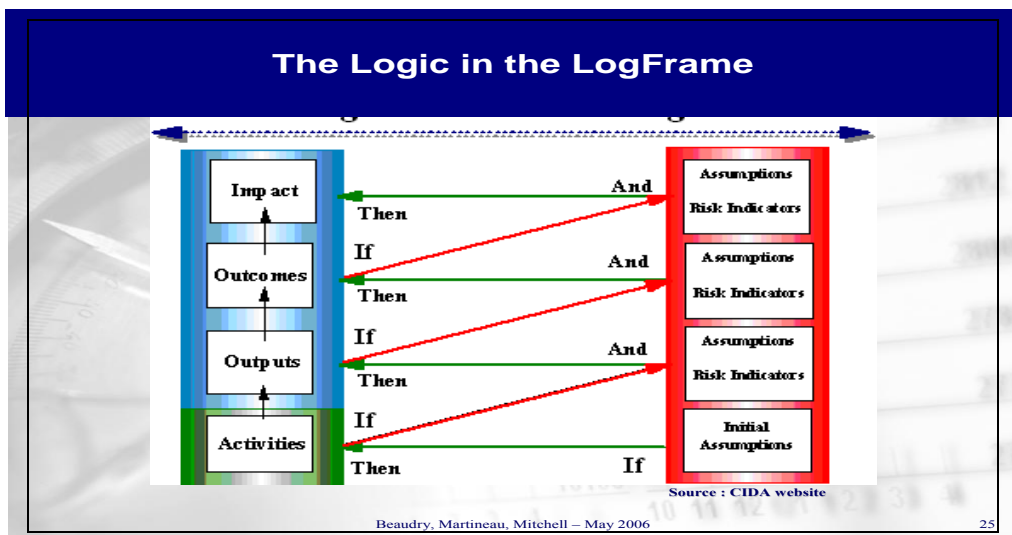
A related and insightful point is also made by Bardach (1977:251-2) when he writes that if the theory on which policy development is based, is fundamentally flawed, the policy will fail no matter how well it is implemented. Emphasising the importance of articulation of underlying theories, Wildavsky (1979:16) argues that public policies are not eternal truths but rather hypotheses subject to alteration and to devising of new and better ones until these in turn are proved unsatisfactory. Another important reason for examining program (policy) theory is stated by Provus 1971 (quoted by Cole 1999:456-457) who contends that if a program is successful others will want to copy it. Therefore, it is important to know the exact recipe of the programmatic activities so it can be reproduced.

In short, without the benefit of a clearly articulated theory about how a policy is supposed to work, one cannot ascertain whether it did work, and why it did or did not produce the intended benefits. Thus when designing a policy evaluation system, measures should be put in place to surface theories that underlie policies. Where such measures are in place, evaluators are in a better position to establish whether the success or failure of a policy was due to the manner in which it was conceptualized or implemented. Two such measures that are advocated through the

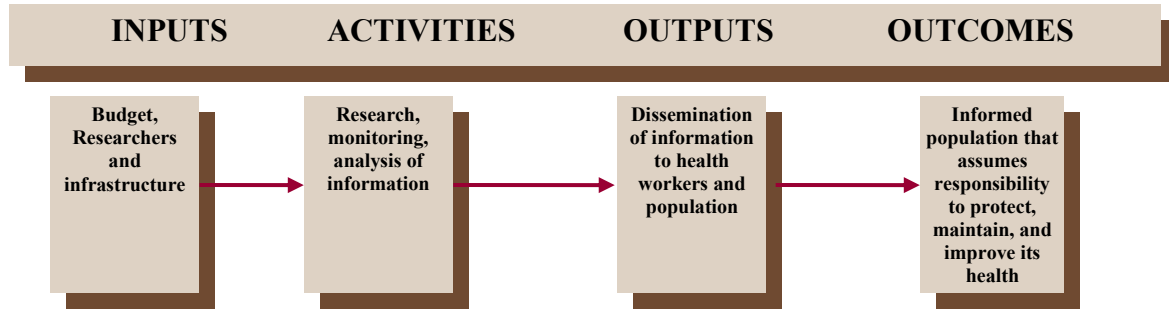


OBE approach include: theory of change or programme theory and logic model. According to Bickman (1987:2) program theory can be defined as —a plausible and sensible model of how a program [policy] is supposed to work.” A good program theory logically and reasonably links program activities to one or more outcomes for participants. Program theories can often be captured in a series of —if-then” statements – IF something is done to, with, or for program participants, THEN theoretically something will change. **Figure 1** below illustrates how a program theory can be captured in a logframe.

**Figure 1: Logframe**



On the other hand logic model is a tool for illustrating an underlying program theory. A logic model illustrates the linkages between program components and outcomes (Wilder Research Center 1987:2-4). **Figure 2** below illustrates how a logic model can be captured.

**Figure 2: Example of a RBM Logic Model**

The extent to which departments institutionalise these measures or instruments (theory of change/programme theory and logic model) would be regarded as an early indication of whether or not departments apply RBM principles. Clear theory of change and logic model set a strong foundation for a policy to be implemented, monitored and evaluated. It is during these phases (implementation, monitoring and evaluation) when performance information would be collected and analysed.

## **2.3 Attributes of Appropriate Performance Information**

### **2.3.1 Introduction**

Performance information is defined (Pollitt 2006:39) as systematic information describing the outputs and outcomes of public policies, programmes generated by systems and processes intended to produce such information. It thus includes data generated by performance monitoring systems operated by operational managers, as well as data that flow from evaluations, performance audits, and other special exercises and reviews which have as a main purpose the discovery and analysis of performance information.

This perspective on performance information, which is required by managers who must make evidence-informed decisions, is further supported by Sandahl (1993) who makes a crucial observation on the attributes of performance information. Sandahl (1993:139) observes that many people regard the creation of better results-information systems as one of the most important factors in the transformation of the public sector from a system controlled by regulations into one more oriented towards results. Sandahl's observation frames the researcher's understanding of performance information value chain; which is comprised of systematic information on inputs,

activities, outputs, and outcomes. Any performance information that does not meet this standard would be considered as inadequate for policy advice and justifying of policy achievements. That is, if the department's evaluation system and processes enable it to objectively generate utilisable performance information on inputs (resources/expenditure), activities (things that the organisation do or processes) outputs (products/deliverables) and outcomes (results or changes as a result of products delivered), then it would be considered as outcomes-based.

### **2.3.2 Why does reliable performance information matter?**

Mayne and Zapico-Goni (1997:3) answer this question well when they contend that governments around the world are trying to create well-managed public sectors, public sectors that are responsive to the publics they serve; deliver the results promised for their citizens, and can do so with reduced resources in the most efficient way possible. Under such conditions a key common element is the need to know how well you are actually performing in relation to expectations. If public servants are to become good managers, focused on the results they are trying to achieve rather than the procedures they follow, they must have reliable information on the performance being achieved. Thus affordable excellence in the public sector is not possible without good performance information.

Performance information also provides the practical means to manage and be in control. Without it, managers have to fall back on following procedures. Also critically important, enhanced public accountability is impossible without credible performance information. Citizens do not, will not, and should not be expected to simply trust politicians and public servants to deliver the goods. As the source of funds for government programs and services, citizens are entitled to meaningful and transparent reporting on what their government has achieved for them with their tax dollars (Mayne and Zapico-Goni 1997:3). Also for managers to manage well and be able to give credible demonstration of their performance, managers would need good performance information: "Thus, performance measurement reinforces efforts towards modernisation and enable the organisation to demonstrate its results and their value to politicians, customers and the public" (OECD 1994:19).

Mayne and Zapico-Goni (1997:4) add that today the government is operating in increasingly complex social and economic situations where guess management is insufficient and in an era of constant change where to be effective, managers must respond with informed decisions. The

more managers are required to make decisions, the more they need reliable performance information. It is the proposition of this study that for such performance information to be generated and utilised, a credible evidence-based system must underlie an outcomes based evaluation system. The following section discusses in detail attributes of an evidence-based system.

## **2.4 Embedding an Evidence-based System**

### **2.4.1 Introduction**

On the face of it, modernisation provides a new lease of life for the notion of effective government action informed by reason, a promise of a new ‘post-ideological’ approach to government, ‘... an approach where evidence would take the centre stage in the decision making process’ (Davies, Nutley and Smith 1999:3). Unlike political ideology or religious beliefs, proof is not a matter of faith; nor is it a matter of logic or the rationality of an argument alone. It requires corroboration by empirical evidence collected, analysed and reported to the highest standards. What qualifies as evidence might vary between styles of research, but the need for research to verify its claims with reference to empirical evidence remains constant (Denscombe 2002:197).

Proof, based on evidence, can either confirm or refute existing knowledge and understanding. Thus in the logic of scientific discovery, Popper (1959) argues that research evidence can support knowledge, but it can never prove it absolutely because new evidence may be found at a later date that would contradict or refute what we already know. All knowledge, all theory, all evidence, must therefore remain provisional – the best available at the time – but always open to refutation by new evidence at a later date (Popper quoted by Becker and Bryman 2004:55). Generating objective and utilisable performance information requires a shift from an ideological to evidence-base policy-making approach.

### **2.4.2 What is Evidence-based policy making approach?**

Evidence-based policy is public policy informed by rigorously established objective evidence. The goal of evidence-based policy is not simply to increase reliance on research results to inform decision making, but to increase reliance on “~~god~~” (i.e., rigorous) research. The first step in using evidence-based policy is learning how to objectively weigh information to determine its

value as evidence. For a program or policy to earn the classification —evidence-based,” it must have been rigorously tested and found to achieve its stated outcomes effectively. While untested programs may result in positive outcomes, without rigorous research it is not certain how they work. Equally important, it is not certain what types of people or populations the programs benefit (Harrison, Owen, Rosanbalm and Rosch 2009:5).

Top-tier evidence-based programs are those proven in well-designed and well-implemented randomised controlled trials, preferably conducted in natural community settings, to produce sizeable, sustained benefits to participants and/or society. While Randomized Controlled Trials (RCTs) are the gold standard in research, they may also be time consuming, logistically challenging and expensive. As a result, less rigorous evaluation methods make up approximately 90 percent of evaluation studies. Such designs can be useful in generating *hypotheses* about what works, and indeed are a good first step in determining which interventions are ready to be tested more rigorously. However, they do not provide strong evidence of effectiveness; and unless they are used carefully they may easily lead to erroneous conclusions (Harrison *et al.* 2009:5-7).

Stressing the importance of the evidence-based policy making approach Harrison *et al.* (2009:6) posit that evidence-based policy provides an effective mechanism to establish, in a scientifically valid way, what works or does not work, and for whom it works or does not work. With this structured approach to evaluation, knowledge can be used to improve practice, allowing successful programs to develop iteratively over time. Without this approach, interventions go in and out of practice, little is learned about what works, and the effectiveness of social programs does not advance significantly over time. Rigorous evaluation can end the spinning of wheels and bring rapid progress to social policy as it has to the field of medicine.

### **2.4.3 What We Talk About When We Talk About Evidence**

Lomas (2005) as quoted by Keynes (2008:2) distills —evidence” into three different types. The first is context-free evidence, which is what works in general, or knowledge about the overall —potential” of something. This is typically medical-effectiveness or biomedical research (e.g. male circumcision can be a strong preventative measure to HIV-acquisition in men). The second is context-sensitive evidence, which puts evidence into a context that makes it operational or relevant to a particular setting (e.g. male circumcision in a particular society may fail as an intervention due to health system weakness and underlying poverty issues). Context-sensitive

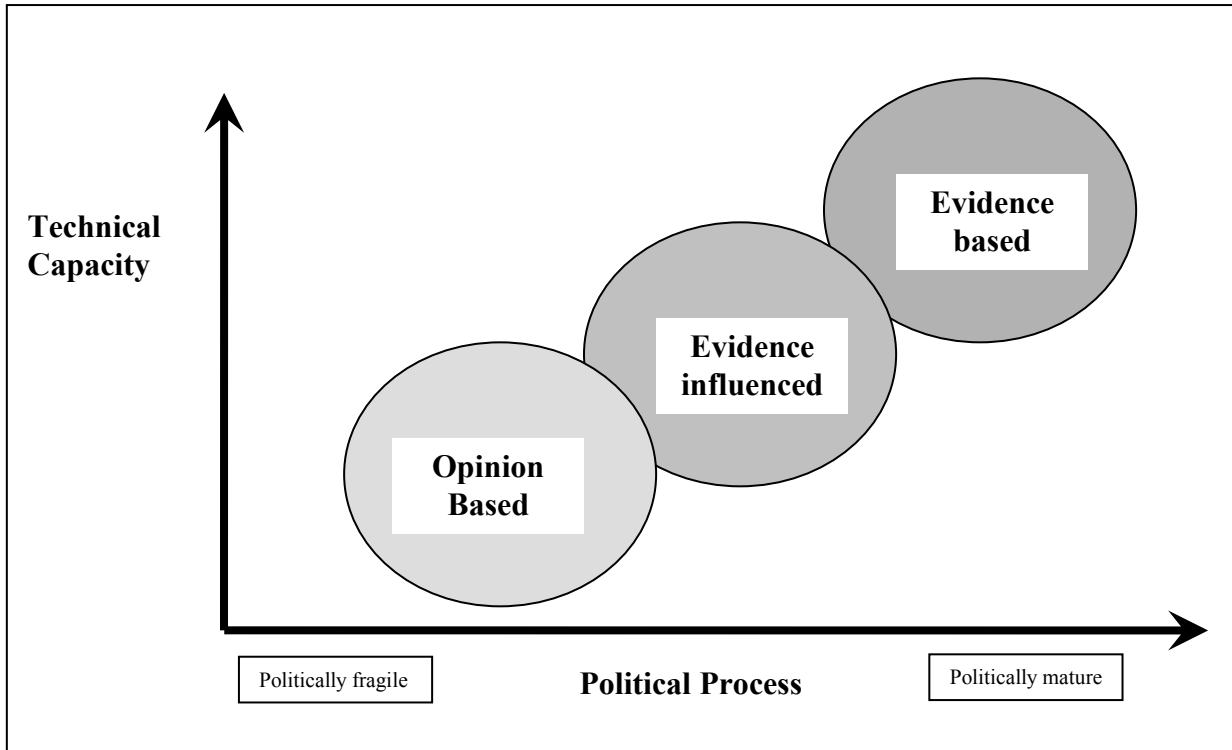
research can be thought of as where the biomedical meets the social science, or where the quantitative meets the qualitative - where the theory meets the reality. Both of these types of “evidence” are captured in systematic reviews, in other syntheses, in single studies, and in pilot or case studies.

The third category of evidence is often the most troublesome – colloquial evidence. Roughly defined as any kind of evidence “that establishes a fact or gives reason for believing in something,” it is typically comprised of expertise, opinions, and first-hand experience and realities. Some commentators have suggested that colloquial evidence is useful for plugging the holes that the other types of evidence do not address; it may indeed be critical where the evidence is inconclusive, lacking, or non-existent (Keynes 2008:5-6).

Despite varying perspectives on what constitutes evidence, perhaps the unifying theme and basic requirements in all the definitions is that the evidence (however construed) must be independently observed and verified (Davies 2000:2). The extent to which departments’ information systems are able to generate evidence or performance information which could be independently observed and verified, would serve as an indication of whether or not they have instituted an evidence-based system. That is, proof of whether the policy has or has not met its targets is not a matter of faith; nor is it a matter of logic or the rationality of an argument alone. It requires corroboration by empirical evidence collected, analysed and reported to the highest standards.

#### **2.4.4 Classification of countries based on evidence-based practices**

Segone (2008:27) contends that many governments and organisations are moving from “opinion based policy” towards “evidence-based policy”, and are in the stage of “evidence-influenced policy”. As could be shown in figure 3 below, this is mainly due to the fact that the policy making process is inherently political and, that the processes through which evidence translates into policy options often fails to meet required quality standards.

**Figure 3: Dynamic of Policy Making**

*Adopted from Marco Segone, 2008*

Segone (2008:22-23) provides another interesting perspective on the classification of countries based on the prevailing evidence-based practices when he argues that developing and transition countries vary greatly in the quantity and quality of information available to policy-makers, and in the extent to which this information is used. Based on the Paris 21 typology (Paris 21 is a partnership for strengthening statistics led by the OECD), he distinguishes four types of country. These are:

#### **2.4.4.1 Vicious circle countries**

In such countries evidence is weak and policymakers make little use of it. Evidence-based policy-making is not practiced, which results in poor policy decisions and poor development outcomes. In this case, it is necessary to adopt measures which will simultaneously increase both the demand and supply of evidence, as well as improve the dialogue between producers and users of evidence.

#### **2.4.4.2. Evidence supply-constrained countries**

In such countries although evidence is weak, it is increasingly used by policy-makers. However, evidence deficiency reduces the quality of decision-making which results in poor development outcomes. Policy-makers are likely to resent being held to account on the basis of inadequate evidence. The priority is to adopt measures to increase the quantity and quality of evidence, which will require additional technical assistance for capacity development, as well as to improve the dialogue between producers and users of data. The challenge is to strike a balance between generating improvements to evidence quickly, while laying the foundations for better performance of the national monitoring and evaluation system in the long-run.

#### **2.4.4.3. Evidence demand-constrained countries**

In such countries the quantity and quality of evidence is improving, but it is not used for decision-making because policy-makers lack the incentives and/or the capacity to utilise it. This results in poor policy design and poor development outcomes. Policy-makers are likely to be at the very least wary of (or may even actively dislike) having more and better figures pushed at them when these data may not support decisions they have taken or wish to take. In this case, priority should be given to the adoption of measures to increase the demand for evidence, as well as to improve the dialogue between producers and users of data.

This view is anchored by Kogan (1999) (quoted in Davies *et al.* 1999:3) who argues that, [in Evidence demand-constrained countries] governments will seek to legitimise their policies with reference to the notion of evidence-based decision making but use research evidence only when it supports politically-driven priorities. Thus Cook (1997:40) contends that ‘... the politician’s prime goal is to be re-elected rather than to respect technical evidence ...’ As J.M. Keynes once famously said: ‘There is nothing a politician likes so little as to be well informed; it makes decision-making so complex and difficult.’

#### **2.4.4.4. Virtuous circle countries**

In such countries evidence is improving and is being increasingly used for decision-making. The production of good (or at least improved) evidence is matched by its widespread (or at least increased) use in decision-making. These two processes mutually reinforce each other, resulting in better policy design and better development outcomes. This situation of virtuous circle



countries serves more as a goal to be achieved, even in some developed nations, than as a description of events in a particular group of countries. Nevertheless, it provides a useful benchmark against which to compare the other three cases.

The above categorisation of countries by Segone suggests that developing a culture of evidence-based policy-making is a slow process which may take years. But the potential rewards are worth the effort. The following section on the elements of good quality data discusses such processes which are required in order to embed the culture of evidence generation.

#### **2.4.5 Elements of a Good Quality Data**

Literature reviewed suggests that assessing and improving the quality of data stored in information systems are both important and difficult tasks. Thus, for an increasing number of companies that rely on information as one of their most important assets, enforcing high data quality levels represents a strategic investment aimed at preserving the value of those assets. For a public administration or a government, good data quality translates into good service and good relationships with the citizens (Angelett, Grillo, Lalk, Lorusso, Missier and Verykios 2003:135). A similar perspective on the importance of data quality is provided by Briceño and Gaarder (2009:33) when they contend that setting up an M&E system requires the strengthening of data collection and processing systems in order to ensure high quality of data.

Challenges encountered by developing countries differ from those encountered by developed countries. Developing countries face at least three key challenges with their performance information and data quality. First, they rely heavily on administrative data whose quality is often poor. In such countries there is too much data, not enough information. Second, an excessive volume of under-utilised data is collected. Third, there is often a plethora of uncoordinated sector and sub-sector data systems, using different data definitions and periodicity (Mackay 2006:8, 13).

In order to improve data quality, few interventions are suggested in the reviewed literature. The first step involves building reliable ministry data systems which would help provide the raw data on which M&E systems depend. This involves auditing of data systems and a diagnosis of data capacities (Mackay 2006:13). The second step involves setting clear standards on what constitute good quality data. Since this study advocates for an evidence-based approach, data should be gathered and critically appraised according to explicit and sound principles of scientific inquiry

(Birdsall, Levine and Savedoff 2006:74). This is because scientific evidence-based decision making draws heavily upon the findings of scientific research (including social scientific research). Thus, the first step in using evidence-based policy is learning how to objectively weigh information to determine its value as evidence (Harrison *et al.* 2009:5).

The third step involves putting data quality assurance measures in place. Such measures improve integrity of data collection, data verification and reliability. Stressing the importance of verifiable performance information, Mackay (2007:58) argues that performance information becomes important— particularly when it is used for accountability purposes. This is clearly of concern and requires specific measures to verify the data, such as through independent data audits. Verification could also involve accreditation of an agency's processes for data verification.

Literature is replete with considerable mechanisms for ensuring that generated data could be independently observed and verifiable. Mackay (2007:8) noted that some governments (for example, Chile) rely on external audit committees to perform this function, some rely on the national audit office (for example, Canada) (Mayne and Wilkins 2005), and some rely principally on internal ministry audit units (for example, Australia). Some rely on the central ministry checking data provided by sector ministries (for example, Colombia), and others have no audit strategy (for example, Argentina) (Zaltsman 2006a). Chile (and most other Latin American countries) deals with this by contracting out evaluations to external bodies such as academic institutions and consulting firms; moreover, the evaluations are commissioned and managed by the finance ministry rather than by sector ministries, and the process of seeking bids and awarding contracts to conduct the evaluations is entirely transparent.

Another insightful perspective on the independence of the verification mechanisms is provided by Schwartz and Mayne 2005 (as quoted in Currstine 2005:69) who note that threats to data quality can come from poor practices in gathering and analysing data and from political pressure to look good. Thus the independent audit of performance data helps to reduce these problems.

The fourth and last step entails making data/ performance information accessible to users. Parker (2008:77) underscores the importance of accessible repository when he writes that the organisation and storage of information is a crucial management step, to make knowledge accessible for sharing and for analysis. Information, particularly quantitative information, collected through monitoring systems and evaluation exercises is frequently organised within

databases and document management systems, for internal use as well as, increasingly, external access.

The above literature reviewed suggests that key practices and mechanisms are essential for the successful institutionalisation of an evidence-based approach. This provides a framework against which the prevailing evidence-based system in SA would be assessed in chapter 4.

## **2.5 Institutionalising an Outcome-Based Policy Evaluation System**

### **2.5.1 Introduction**

The preceding section on embedding an evidence-based system focused mainly on the processes and mechanisms of objectively generating credible performance information or evidence on whether policies are working or not. What has not been covered yet is the framework within which this evidence should be generated. In other words, what data should be generated and for what purpose? Literature indicates that governments are increasingly being called upon to demonstrate results. Stakeholders are no longer solely interested in organisational activities and outputs; they are now more than ever interested in actual outcomes. Thus, as demands for greater accountability and real results have increased, there is an attendant need for enhanced results-based monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of policies (Kusek and Rist as quoted in Segone 2008:98). Therefore the focus of this section is on setting a framework that would enable departments to generate utilisable performance information not only on inputs, activities and outputs but also on outcomes. This framework is based on a RBM approach. The introduction of a RBM M&E system takes decision makers one step further in assessing whether and how goals are being achieved overtime.

Proponents of a RBM approach contend that governments and organisations may successfully implement programs or policies, but have they produced the actual, intended results. In other words, have governments truly delivered on promises made to their stakeholders? (Kusek and Rist 2004:xi&3). Results based M&E is a powerful public management tool that can be used to help policymakers and decision makers to track progress and demonstrate the impact of a given project, program, and policy. The Results-based M&E differs from traditional implementation focused M&E in that it moves beyond an emphasis on inputs and outputs to a greater focus on outcomes and impacts (Kusek and Rist 2004:1).

### **2.5.2 What We Talk About When We Talk About Evaluation**

Performance information can come, essentially, from two sources: a monitoring system and an evaluation system. Both are needed, but they are not the same. The distinction between monitoring and evaluation is made here both for conceptual and practical purposes. Monitoring can be viewed as periodically measuring progress toward explicit short, intermediate, and long-term results. It also can provide feedback on the progress made (or not), to decision-makers who can use the information in various ways to improve the effectiveness of government (Kusek and Rist as quoted by Segone 2008:101). Monitoring involves measurement: what is measured is the progress towards achieving an objective or outcome (result). However, the outcome cannot be measured directly. It must first be translated into a set of indicators that, when regularly measured, will provide information whether or not the outcome is being achieved. An evaluation system serves a complementary but distinct function to that of a monitoring system.

Building an evaluation system allows for a more in-depth study of why results (outcomes and impacts) were achieved, or not; can bring in other data sources, in addition to those indicators already in use; can address factors which are too difficult or too expensive to continuously monitor; and, perhaps most important, can tackle the issue of why and how the trends being tracked with monitoring data are moving in the directions they are. Such data, on impacts and causal attribution, are not to be taken lightly and can play an important role in an organisation making strategic resource allocations. Some performance issues, such as long-term impacts, attribution, cost-effectiveness, and sustainability, are better addressed by evaluation than by routine performance monitoring reports (Kusek and Rist 2008:100).

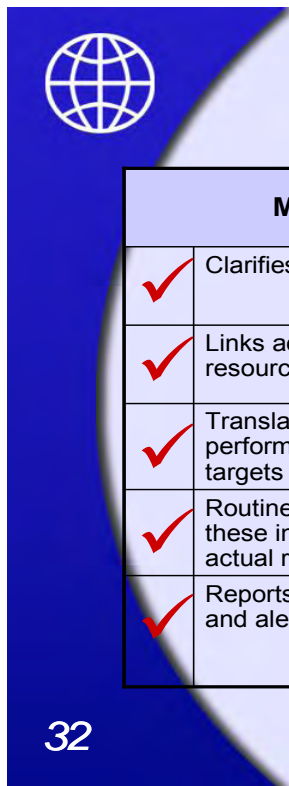
Another perspective of evaluation is advanced by Scriven (1991) (quoted in Segone 2008:47) when he contends that evaluation refers to the process of determining the merit, worth, or value of something. The evaluation process involves identifying relevant values or standards that apply to what is being evaluated, performing empirical investigation using techniques from the social sciences, and then integrating conclusions with the standards into an overall evaluation or set of evaluations.

According to Caro (1977) (quoted in Segone 2008:47), evaluation must fulfill two purposes – information and judgment. The former fits well with the research community's traditional epistemological perspective or what Chelimsky (1997) as quoted by (Patton 1997:65) calls

knowledge perspective, whereas making judgments does not. Social research's aim, traditionally and in a narrow sense, is limited exclusively to producing knowledge but not to producing value judgments or evaluative conclusions.

Kusek and Rist (2004:100) stressing the importance of both monitoring and evaluation, argue that a results/outcome-based monitoring and evaluation system can help policymakers answer the fundamental questions of whether promises were kept and outcomes achieved. If governments are promising to achieve improvements in policy areas such as in health care or education, there needs to be some means of demonstrating that such improvements have or have not occurred, i.e., there is a need for measurement. However, the issue is not measurement per se. There is a general need both to document and demonstrate government's own performance to its stakeholders as well as to use the performance information to continuously improve.

So though emphasis of this study is on evaluation, it is clear that a monitoring system is a backdrop of an evaluation system. Thus Kusek and Rist (2004:13) posit that an evaluation is a complement to monitoring in that when a monitoring system sends signals that the efforts are going off the rail (for example, that the target population is not making use of the services, that costs are accelerating, that there is a real resistance to adopting an innovation, and so forth), then good evaluative information can help clarify the realities and trends noted with the monitoring system. Kusek and Rist (2004:13) stress the need for good evaluative information throughout the lifecycle of an initiative – not just at the end – to try and determine causality. **Table 1** illustrates these complementary roles of a results-based M&E system.

**Table 1: Complementary Roles of RBM Monitoring and Evaluation**


*Complementary Roles of  
Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation*

Monitoring		Evaluation	
✓	Clarifies program objectives	✓	Analyzes why intended results were or were not achieved
✓	Links activities and their resources to objectives	✓	Assesses specific causal contributions of activities to results
✓	Translates objectives into performance indicators and set targets	✓	Examines implementation process
✓	Routinely collects data on these indicators, compares actual results with targets	✓	Explores unintended results
✓	Reports progress to managers and alerts them to problems	✓	Provides lessons, highlights significant accomplishment or program potential, and offers recommendations for improvement

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Source: IPDET presentation (2006:32)

The evaluative performance information that is required to evaluate policy performance and gauge the impact of government's policy decisions could be package for different purposes. According to Patton (1997:65) evaluation findings can serve three primary purposes: making overall judgments, facilitating improvements and generating knowledge. Chelimskey (1997) as quoted by (Patton 1997:65) distinguishes these three purposes by the perspective that undergirds them: judgments are undergirded by the accountability perspective; improvements are informed by a developmental perspective; and generation knowledge operates from the knowledge perspective of academic values. These perspectives (accountability, development and knowledge) represent the three data terrains of an outcomes-based evaluation system. This study contends that an outcomes-based policy evaluation should be able to generate performance information for these three terrains. A brief overview of these perspectives is presented below with the aim of unpacking their distinguishing features.

### **2.5.2.1 Judgment-Oriented Evaluation**

Evaluations aimed at determining the overall merit, worth, or value of something are judgment oriented. Merit refers to the intrinsic value of a program, for example, how effective it is in meeting the needs of those it is intended to help (Patton 1997:65). Judgment oriented evaluation approaches include performance measurement for public accountability; program audits; summative evaluations aimed at deciding if a program is sufficiently effective to be continued or replicated; quality control and compliance reports; and comparative ratings or rankings of programs consumer reports. In judgment-oriented evaluations, what Scriven (1980) has called “the logic of valuing” rules, four steps are necessary: (1) select criteria for merit; (2) set standards of performance; (3) measure performance; and synthesize results into a judgment of value (Patton 1997:68). By way of example, a summative evaluation as one of the judgmental-oriented evaluations is briefly discussed below.

Bryson, Purdon, Lessof and Woodfield (2001:iii) define summative evaluation as evaluation used to form a summary judgment about how a programme [policy] operated. A summative evaluation is intended to estimate the effects (outcomes or impacts) of a project intervention and to determine to what extent the observed changes can be attributed to the project intervention. Very often a summative evaluation will not provide any feedback to managers and policy-makers until the end of project (Bamberger and Rugh 2008:140). Summative evaluation provides data to support a judgment about the program’s worth so that a decision can be made about merit of continuing the program (Patton 1997:68). A summative evaluation focuses on the degree to which desired outcomes have been achieved and the extent to which the policy, program or initiative has helped achieve outcomes (Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat 2004:11).

### **2.5.2.2 Improvement-Oriented Evaluation**

Patton (1997:68) contends that using evaluation results to improve a program turns out, in practice, to be fundamentally different from rendering judgment about overall merit, or worth. Improvement-oriented forms of evaluation include formative evaluation, quality enhancement, responsive evaluation, learning organisation approaches, humanistic evaluation, and Total Quality Management (TQM) among others. What these approaches share is a focus on improvement – making things better – rather than rendering summative judgment.

While judgment-oriented evaluation requires pre-ordinate, explicit criteria and values that form the basis for judgment, improvement-oriented approaches tend to be more open-ended. Such approaches gather varieties of data about strengths and weaknesses with the expectations that both will be found and each can be used to inform an ongoing cycle of reflection and innovation.

Referring to one accustomed form of an improvement oriented evaluation Patton (1997:69) argues that formative evaluation typically connotes collecting data for a specific period of time, usually during the start-up or pilot phase of a project, to improve implementation, solve unanticipated problems, and make sure that participants are progressing toward desired outcomes. A formative evaluation design is intended to provide constant feedback to program management to help detect problems and to find ways to improve project, programme and policy implementation and ensure accessibility to all sectors of the target population, contends Bamberger (2008:140). A formative evaluation is usually conducted in mid-cycle of a policy, program or initiative. Its purpose is to provide information in order to improve the policy, program or initiative. A formative evaluation is useful if questions arise as to the delivery of a program. Formative evaluations can be used to address specific delivery issues. “Full” formative evaluations can be expected to assess outputs, early results, validation of program logic, and the likelihood of long-term results achievement (Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat 2004:11).

### **2.5.2.3 Knowledge-Oriented Evaluation**

Both judgment-oriented and improvement-oriented evaluations involve the instrumental use of results. Instrumental use occurs when a decision or action follows, at least in part, from the evaluation. Conceptual use of findings, on the other hand, contrast with instrumental use in that no decision or action is expected; rather, it “is the use of evaluations to influence thinking about issues in general way” (Freeman and Rossi 1985:388). In this sense, evaluation findings contribute by increasing knowledge.

This knowledge can be as specific as clarifying a program’s model, testing theory, distinguishing types of interventions, figuring out how to measure outcomes, generating lessons learned, and/or elaborating policy options, contends Patton (1997:70-71). A theory-based evaluation is another form of the knowledge-oriented evaluations and receives a special attention from this study. This is due to the fact that the proposition of this study is that theories that underlie policies must be



backed up by scientific evidence so that measures of success for policy performance will be effective.

Sanderson (2002:1) argues that more emphasis should be placed on developing a sound evidence base for policy through long-term impact evaluations of policies and programmes. Such evaluation should be theory-based and focused on explaining and understanding how policies achieve their effects using 'multi-method' approaches.

According to advocates of this approach (theory-based evaluations), if a program's "theory of action" or "logic model" (McLaughlin & Jordan, 1999; Patton, 1986; Weiss, 1995) is not carefully explicated and examined in the normal course of an evaluation, a number of difficulties can arise. For example, without knowing the preconceived relationship between a program's delivery and its effects, it is difficult to determine whether the program was delivered as planned and whether or not it produced intended effects (Chen, 1990; Chen & Rossi, 1983; McLaughlin & Jordan, 1999; Patton, 1986; Provus, 1971; Torvatn, 1999; Weiss, 1995; Worthen, 1996). Furthermore, when there is no explicit link between programmatic activities and their intended effects on the problem(s) targeted by the program, the information generated by the evaluation is of little value in improving the program (Chapel & Cotten, 1996; Fitz-Gibbon & Morris, 1996; McLaughlin & Jordan, 1999; Patton, 1986). Likewise, when successes or failures cannot be attributed to individual program components, it is nearly impossible to project the results of the evaluation to other program efforts or to know which parts made a difference and which parts did not (Chen, 1990; Patton, 1986; Weiss, 1995, 1996). This last point is particularly important if one wants to enhance aspects of the [policy and] program that work and/or improve or eliminate components that don't work (cited in Cole 1999:55).

Evaluations are seldom the sole basis for subsequent summative decisions or program improvements, but they contribute, often substantially, if a utilisation-focused approach is used (Patton 1997:70). Literature suggests that irrespective of which evaluation approach or of the purpose of the evaluation, the general rule is that findings should be useful to the intended users. There is widespread concern that, despite the significant resources devoted to programme evaluation and its importance in both industrialised and developing countries, the utilisation of evaluation findings is disappointingly low. This holds true even for evaluations which are

methodologically sound (Bamberger 2008:120). Hence, utilisation-focused evaluations provide an answer to the outcry regarding the under-utilisation of evaluation findings.

The objective of a government M&E systems is never to produce large volumes of performance information, or a large number of high-quality evaluations per se. This would reflect a supply driven approach to an M&E system. Utilisation is the measure of success, argues Mackay (2008:169). However, achieving strong demand within a country is not easy. Thus the focus of the following section is on the key elements of a utilisation-focused approach as well as the factors that limit evaluation use.

### **2.5.3 Utilisation-based Evaluations**

Patton (1997:23) defines utilisation focused evaluation as evaluation done for and with specific, intended primary users for specific, intended uses. However, the fact that evaluation is required by some funder or oversight authority is not a sufficient condition for utilisation focused evaluation. Under such conditions evaluation often becomes an end in itself, something to be done because it is mandated, not because it will be useful or because important things can be learned. Thus, doing an evaluation because it is required is entirely different from doing it because one is committed to grounding decisions and action in a careful assessment of reality (Patton 1997:29). A number of factors have been identified as contributing to the under-utilisation of evaluation findings. Some of which are briefly discussed in the remainder of this section and they include; presence of a personal factor or champion, understanding of a political dimension of evaluation, strengthening of accountability mechanisms, and lack of incentives for evaluations.

#### **2.5.5.1 Personal Factor**

Patton (1997:44) defines personal factor as the presence of an identifiable individual or group of people who personally care about the evaluation and the findings it generates. Where such a person or a group is present, evaluations are used; where the personal factor is absent, there is a correspondingly marked absence of evaluation use. Patton (1997:44) posits that the personal factor represents leadership, interest, enthusiasm, determination, commitment, assertiveness, and caring of specific, individual people. These are people who actively seek information to make judgments and reduce uncertainties. They want to increase their ability to predict the outcomes of

programmatic activity and thereby enhance their own discretion as decision makers, policy makers, consumers, program participants, and funders, or whatever role they play.

In a nutshell, though evaluations may be methodologically sound and produce reliable and appropriate performance information, they will continue to be under-utilised if critical stakeholders are not involved from the beginning of the process. To this effect Bamberger (2008:122) conclude that lack of a feeling of ownership, or lack of commitment to an evaluation may be an inevitable result in cases where many stakeholders are not consulted about the objectives or design of the evaluation; are not involved in implementation and, have no opportunity to comment on the findings.

#### **2.5.5.2 Understanding of a Political Dimension of Evaluation**

The evaluation family traditionally has included good researchers with their ideal of neutral, objective research as the prototype for evaluation and has recognised these partners in the evaluation enterprise with awards and high status. Evaluation work, however, is always couched within a political context, and this reality brings different kinds of partners into the relationship. These partners, including politicians and policymakers, often make the evaluation family uneasy (Conner and Vestman 2008:46).

Literature reviewed shows that there has been considerable debate about which models should be adopted for making judgments. One strategy is to treat judgments as technical measurements, in order to avoid involving values with their attendant political implications. It is precisely at this juncture, however, where evaluation and politics are related. Both are concerned with values, value judgments, and value conflicts in public life. The reality is that evaluation, in order to fulfill its second purpose of making judgments, cannot avoid the issue of politics (Caro (1977) as quoted in Conner and Vestman 2008:47).

Holfvoet and Rombout (2008:593-594) contend that the fact that politics are part and parcel of M&E has long been acknowledged in the context of project and programme evaluation (Palumbo 1987; Weiss 1970, 1987). First, evaluations are supposed to feed into decision making and reports necessarily enter the political arena. Second, evaluations implicitly make political statements about the legitimacy, utility and appropriateness of projects and/or programmes. Third, since projects and/or programmes are creations of political decisions that remain subject to pressure(s)

during implementation, the issue of politics is inevitable during evaluation (Weiss 1970). While the relationship between politics and evaluation is potentially damaging, not all political aspects of evaluation need to be understood negatively. For example, for utilisation-focused evaluations, usage is the driving force. Consequently the evaluator is encouraged to tie the evaluation into the specific political context, and the needs of the users (Chelimsky 1987a, 1987b; Patton 1987; Weiss 1999). One can assume therefore that national politics and the political context in which stakeholders, both national and international, operate will have an influence on various dimensions of M&E.

In an effort to demystify a political dimension of evaluation, Conner and Vestman (2008:53-61) propose a very useful framework for clarifying the nature of the connections between evaluation and politics. According to this framework the connection between evaluation and politics can be framed in three different ways; which can be characterised as ‘positions’ or ‘perspectives’. They are different along two dimensions: whether it is possible operationally to separate evaluation and politics, and whether it is desirable conceptually to separate evaluation and politics.

The viewpoint from the first position is that politics and evaluation can and should be kept operationally and conceptually apart. In this case, the evaluator works independently to provide an objective, neutral assessment of the program, project or policy; the politician then receives this assessment and does with it what he or she decides. This view suits the definition of politics as the art of rational government, where the evaluator is an objective, impartial civil servant. The information function of evaluation should be under the control of the evaluator and be his/her primary activity. The judgment function, based on the information, should be under the control of others, including politicians, program planners and implementers, and the electorate. In this view, evaluation is “social research.”

In the second position on the connection of evaluation and politics, it is accepted that evaluation takes place in a political environment and that evaluation and politics therefore cannot entirely be separated, specifically in the judging component of evaluation. In the operational, information-finding aspects, however, the evaluator can and should stay separate from the political component. For example, Chelimsky (1987) (quoted by Conner *et al.* 2008:57) points out the need for evaluators to place themselves in the political context that constitutes the program evaluation and suggests that evaluators must understand the political system in which evaluation

operates and the information needs of those policy actors who utilise evaluations. Chelimsky (1987) further contends that evaluators must devote much time to negotiating, discussing, briefing, accuracy-checking, prioritizing, and presenting. At the same time, the evaluator takes a professional role for the conduct of the evaluator that is non-political in the narrow definition of politics.

This second position emphasizes the evaluator's role as a professional expert, but it includes two distinctively different ideas on how politics and expertise can be conceptualized. The first idea has a market perspective and reduces the evaluation-politics relation to a technical task, where the profession is defined by the measurement of quality and efficiency. This technocratic view of politics has come to prominence as part of the worldwide spread of neo-liberal discourse. Here, evaluation becomes a means for quality assurance that measures the performance (efficiency) of practices against indicators of success in achieving the targets. The profession of evaluation is reduced to technical expertise to measure quality and performances through prefabricated schemas and formula. The second idea represents a value-committed perspective on the relation that concerns a professional role that makes the evaluation more democratic.

In comparison with the first and second positions on evaluation and politics, the third position does not see politics stopping at the private sphere but instead views politics as something integrated in our everyday life. Because of this, there can be no separation between evaluation and politics and therefore no neutral value or operational position taken by the evaluator. In this view, it is important for evaluators to formulate a theoretical framework for a broader understanding of the program or subject that is evaluated. Evaluation approaches that could be connected with this kind of ideas are characterised to be: intentionally and directly engage[d] with the politics and values of an evaluation context, in order to explicitly advance particular political interests and values, and often also, to effect some kind of socio-political change in the evaluation context itself. Examples of value-engaged evaluative stances include feminist, empowerment, and democratizing approaches to evaluation.

This conceptualisation of evaluation-politics relationship is important since it outlines conditions under which evaluation is done in government as well as practices that either lead to or not utilisation of evaluation findings. The first perspective, social research, seems to promote an arms-length approach to evaluation. This is the perspective which has led to proliferation of a

number of technical sound but politically irrelevant research findings. Thus Segone (2008:19) contends that if evidence that is technically sound is not policy relevant then it will not be used by policy-makers.

Thus the second perspective, which recognizes that evaluation takes place in a political environment and that evaluation and politics cannot entirely be separated, seems appropriate to government. This is so much so since government officials are required to provide credible and reliable performance information that is considered relevant to policy makers as well as politicians. The third perspective is not an option as well for the government evaluators since their role is not to question policy priorities but to provide objective evidence on the performance of government policies. The emerging policy evaluation framework in S.A, which is discussed in chapter 3, seems to be framed around the second perspective.

### **3.5.5.2 Strengthening of accountability mechanisms**

In this section, the researcher explores accountability mechanisms that should be strengthened in order to enhance utilisation of evaluation findings throughout the policy lifecycle. An accountable government is not an end to itself but means to ensuring that checks and balances in a political system do not only ensures validation of findings but also empowers stakeholders (service recipients or citizens) to questions governments' reported achievements. Thus Mackay 2008:89 contends that M&E enhances transparency and supports accountability relationships by revealing the extent to which government has [or not] attained its desired objectives. Monitoring and evaluation provide the essential evidence necessary to underpin strong accountability relationships, such as the accountability of government to the Parliament or Congress, to civil society, and to donors. Monitoring and evaluation also support the accountability relationships within government, such as between sector ministries and central ministries, among agencies and sector ministries, and between ministers, managers, and staff. Unfortunately, according to (Mackay 2008:97) there are a small but growing number of governments which have succeeded in building M&E systems in support of evidence-based policy making, evidence-based management, and evidence-based accountability.

### What is Accountability?

Broadly speaking, accountability exists when there is a relationship where an individual or body, and the performance of tasks or functions by that individual or body, are subject to another's oversight, direction or request that they provide information or justification for their actions. Therefore, the concept of accountability involves two distinct stages: answerability and enforcement. Answerability refers to the obligation of the government, its agencies and public officials to provide information about their decisions and actions and to justify them to the public and those institutions of accountability tasked with providing oversight. Enforcement suggests that the public or the institution responsible for accountability can sanction the offending party or remedy the contravening behavior. As such, different institutions of accountability might be responsible for either or both of these stages (O'Brien and Stapenhurst 2007:1).

### Main forms of accountability

The prevailing view is that institutions of accountability, such as parliament and the judiciary, provide what is commonly termed horizontal accountability, or the capacity of a network of relatively autonomous powers (i.e., other institutions) that can call into question, and eventually punish, improper ways of discharging the responsibilities of a given official. In other words, horizontal accountability is the capacity of state institutions to check abuses by other public agencies and branches of government, or the requirement for agencies to report sideways. Alternatively, vertical accountability is the means through which citizens, mass media and civil society seek to enforce standards of good performance on officials (O'Brien and Stapenhurst 2007:1-2).

While parliament is typically considered as a key institution in constructs of horizontal accountability, it is also important in vertical accountability. Citizens and civil society groups can seek the support of elected representatives to redress grievances and intervene in the case of inappropriate or inadequate action by government. In addition, through the use of public hearings, committee investigations and public petitioning, parliament can provide a vehicle for public voice and a means through which citizens and civic groups can question government (O'Brien and Stapenhurst 2007:2).

One reason why reform towards an outcomes-based evaluation system has been slow to materialise is the weakness of accountability mechanisms within the governance system. All too often, neither donors nor developing country governments are truly accountable to their citizens on the use of development resources. Significant progress towards making aid more effective requires stronger mechanisms for accountability for both donors and partner countries (Segone 2008:17).

#### **2.5.5.4 Lack of incentives for evaluations**

Literature reviewed suggests that strong incentives are necessary if the evaluation function is to be successfully institutionalised in the organisation. Thus the value of evaluation does not come simply from conducting evaluations or from having performance information available; rather, the value comes from using the information to help improve government performance. Thus even in the poorest African countries there is usually a range of performance indicators available, and often qualitative program reviews are also undertaken. The problem is more the poor quality and partial coverage of performance information, and its substantial under-utilisation (Mackay 2006:7). For the successful institutionalisation of an M&E system the demand side is particularly important.

Demand focuses on the priority to use monitoring information and evaluation findings in support of core government activities. Uses include: to assist resource-allocation decisions in the budget process; to help ministries in their policy formulation and analytical work; to aid ongoing management and delivery of government services; and to underpin accountability relationships. Policy-makers may need incentives to use evidence. These include mechanisms to increase the —pull’ for evidence, such as requiring spending bids to be supported by an analysis of the existing evidence-base. One other tool for providing such analysis is the expenditure reviews which are aligned to budget decisions. Hence, Schick (1990:7) notes that the budget process can be organised to ease or complicate the task of cutback; it can sensitize politicians to financial implications of their policies or hide the implications from them; it can stimulate or retard expectations of program expansion.

Thus, a well-functioning expenditure review system means that the government is paying attention not only to the existing revenue base but also to the expenditure base; and that there is a requirement to reexamine issues that would otherwise be left unquestioned. This in turn improves



the capacity of the budget system to deliver fiscal discipline, improves capacity to allocate and reallocate resources according to government priorities, enables changes that will improve operational and managerial efficiency and improves reliance on scientifically generated evidence (Schick 1990:8).

## **2.6 Conclusion**

This section concludes the theoretical framework of this study which mainly focused on developing a framework for generating objective and utilisable policy performance information that is required to evaluate policy performance and gauge the impact of government's policy decisions. It also outlined factors whose presence or absence impact on the utilisation of evaluation findings. This chapter has assisted the researcher to construct a conceptual framework for assessing strides made by SA towards an Outcomes-based Policy Evaluation Framework. The framework is based on the following pillars:

- Policies that are based on sound theories and supported by rigorous/scientific research (evidence-based approach), improve chances of designing and implementing an outcomes-based policy evaluation framework.
- For this evaluation framework to be effective, it must adhere to a Results-based Management approach.
- The task of evaluation is to produce improvement, accountability and knowledge findings about the policies.
- Key factors that are critical to the utilisation of evaluation findings include; presence of a personal factor or champion, understanding of political dimension of evaluation, strengthening of accountability mechanisms, and incentives for evaluations.

## **CHAPTER 3: EMERGING POLICY EVALUATION SYSTEM IN SA**

### **3.1 Policy Management in South Africa**

#### **3.1.1 Introduction**

This section depicts the evolution of the policy-making process, and the role played by various state institutions throughout the process. The purpose is to reveal the conditions under-which policies are developed and whether the conditions are conducive to an evidence-based policy making approach. A historical perspective on policy making follows after the overview of policy management in SA. This perspective is important since it demonstrates strides made by government in improving policy making processes. De Coning (2008:1-3) provides a very succinct and useful overview of literature landscape in SA on Policy Management (Policy making, implementation and evaluation). This overview is important to the researcher since it presents very recent work that has been done in the area of policy management in SA.

#### **3.1.2 Overview of Policy Management in South Africa**

De Coning (2008:1) contends that the body of knowledge in policy management facilitated a drastic transformation of the South African policy and legislative framework in the mid 1990s. This focus on policy development and policy making was soon followed by an emphasis on policy implementation and service delivery, followed by the more recent development of results-based, government-wide monitoring and evaluation systems. It is only in the recent past that South African practitioners have come to realise that these three areas should not be regarded as distinct evolving stages, but rather as three important policy activities that need to be facilitated simultaneously, by purposefully exploring the interconnectedness between them. This assertion by De Coning is in line with the theoretical framework of this study which is based on a dynamic relationship between policy making and policy implementation variables. This study asserts that these two variables have a two-way relationship; that is, a change in one variable affects the second, which in turn affects the first.

In the field of policy development and policy making, South African scholars and practitioners have realised that, in addition to the warranted emphasis on policy analysis (defined as a systematic assessment of policy options), the facilitation of participative policy processes and the institutionalisation of the necessary policy capacities are equally important. Whereas initially

South Africans departed from the classical works of international mainstream scholars (especially regarding policy analysis), increasing use has more recently been made of conceptual frameworks in the field of policy process and institutional arrangements. In the field of analysis, classic frameworks included the works of William Dunn, Hogwood and Gunn, Patton and Sawicki, Quade, Wildavsky and Parsons.

In the field of policy process, the work of William Dunn and Paul Sabatier has been widely used. Indigenised African policy process models such as that of the North African scholars Mutahaba, Baguma and Halfani have proven valuable. In an effort to develop applied process models for use in South Africa, these frameworks were widely used and the more detailed and comprehensive process model of Henry Wissink as well as the generic process model have been utilised by many South African government departments and ministries. In institutional terms, an emphasis have been placed on the institutionalisation of policy capacities in government, where the work of Dror has proven highly significant, as well as on developing appropriate management and analytical capacity where notably the work of inter alia Mutahaba and Balogun, Grindle and Thomas, Dennis Rondinelli, Samuel Paul, and Mark Moore has been widely used.

Local scholars and practitioners have also developed institutional approaches specifically for the South African situation, notably Fanie Cloete, Steven Friedman, Henry Wissink, Job Mokgoro and Chris Heymans. In this respect, the mainstream South African policy textbook has been *Improving public policy. From theory to practice* by Cloete, Wissink and De Coning (2006:43), (De Coning 2008:2).

In the field of policy implementation, which is a relatively under-researched theme, approaches emphasised the role of translating policy to strategy, giving effect to policy through planning (the policy-planning interface) and attaining meaningful service delivery through programme management, project and operations management as well as public-private partnerships (PPPs). Although the role of strategy in translating policy to implementation has been to some extent under-utilised, South Africans have developed such strategies at a number of levels. Examples include ASGISA as a macro strategy at the national level to address poverty, sectoral strategies, such as the Water Resource Management Strategy and provincial strategies, where the Provincial Growth and Development Strategies (PGDSs) have played a significant role in translating national policies to the provincial level as well as articulating provincial specific approaches.

Although project and operations management has received significant attention in South Africa (note the work of van der Waladt, Knipe and the Project Management Institute (PMISA), programme management as a vehicle for integrated service delivery has been underplayed and holds huge potential for the future (De Coning 2008:2-3).

Last, in the field of policy monitoring and evaluation, major strides have been made since 2005 to develop sound performance management systems, especially since the publication of guidelines for government-wide results-based systems by the Presidency in September 2005. Since then, important guidelines have also been developed by the Treasury as well as the Public Service Commission (PSC). International approaches that have assisted South Africans in the development of such systems have included the work of Clarke, Kuzek and Rist, and the OECD and UNDP. Although South Africa is still in its infancy with regard to this topic, meaningful work has been done in developing indicator frameworks as well as establishing monitoring and evaluation units in government. Such efforts have also been made in response to monitoring frameworks by the Millennium Goals, the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), as well as the Presidency. At provincial level, the offices or departments of the premier have also developed transversal M&E systems. Major capacity building and training efforts are presently underway to address the dire skills shortages in this area and the establishment of the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association (SAMEA) is regarded as a significant step (De Coning 2008:3).

### **3.1.3 Paradigm shift in Policy-Making in South Africa**

Roux (2002:418-419) provides a good account of the policy paradigm shift in South Africa. He writes that since 1993/4 South Africa has been characterised by comprehensive political, constitutional and socio-economic transformation and change. South Africa was also provided with the opportunity to break away from the boundaries of isolation and to re-enter the global village. Reforms of such a magnitude inevitably lead to change and transformation in almost all spheres of government and administration, and consequently public policy. This in itself placed a much heavier burden on policy makers, and consequently those involved in the assessment of policies. This was a paradigm shift from the previous elite apartheid government which reserved policy making functions to few practitioners who were agreeable to the policies of the regime. Echoing this point, De Coning (2004:27) writes that ~~In~~ South Africa, following negotiations, elections and the setting up of a new government, a new culture has been established that

demands participation. For this reason, policy management in SA allows for participation in all phases of the policy process”.

Roux (2002:419) also writes that the [1996] Constitution indeed reflects a significant change in political thought, if compared with the separate development policies of the previous apartheid regime. In contrast with previous constitutions, in which Parliament was the supreme authority, Parliament is now subordinate to the Constitution and the 1996 Constitution is indeed the supreme law or ‘authority’ in South Africa.

Roux (2002:419) further argues that there is hardly a functional area of government not touched by the new generation of policy and decision-makers in South Africa. For instance, from 1994 to 2000, twenty four Green Papers and forty White Papers presented [to parliament], which all contain major policy changes. It is this magnitude change in the policy arena that has raised questions amongst the policy-makers and opinion-makers on whether the new policies are delivering the intended results or not. This study asserts that this question could only be answered through an outcomes-based policy evaluation system which is embedded in an evidence-based system. Thus in assessing government’s ability to answer this question, this study explores strides made by government towards an outcomes-based evaluation framework.

#### **3.1.4 Policy-Making Process in South Africa**

Gumede (2008:12) argues that Overall, the process of making law or government policy is a lengthy one, involving a number of structures. By the time the draft legislation reaches parliament, where it is tabled as a bill, it will have gone through a specific standard process. The process generally begins with a discussion document, called a Green Paper. This is drafted in the ministry or department dealing with that issue, with the aim of demonstrating the way in which the ministry or department is thinking on a particular policy. This is a critical stage of any policy since the theory informing policy should be clarified and substantiated by appropriate evidence-based research.

The Green Paper is then published, so that anyone who is interested and/or affected can give comments, suggestions and ideas. The Green Paper process is followed by a more refined discussion document, a White Paper, which is a broad statement of government policy. This is

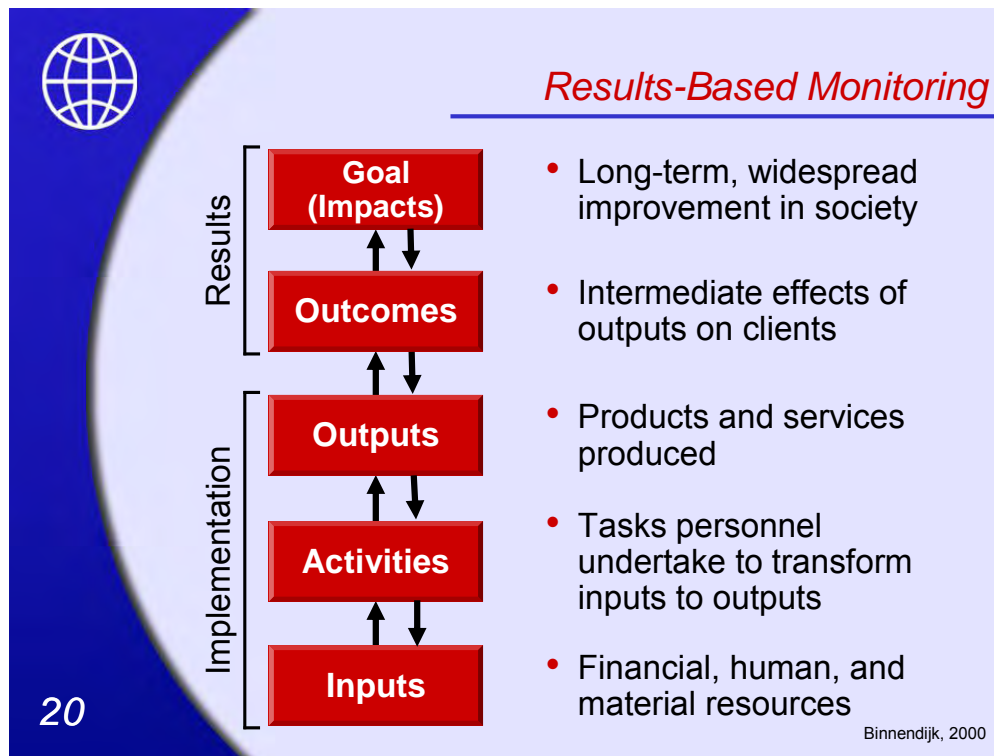
drafted by the department or a task team designated by the government minister of that department. Comment may again be invited from interested parties. The parliamentary committees may propose amendments or other proposals, and send the policy study back to the ministry for further discussion and final decisions.

Once approved by the Law Commission and cabinet, the White Paper is sent to the state law advisers, who assess the legal and technical implications of the draft law. It is then introduced in parliament as a bill. At that stage the bill must have already gone through public participation process where organs of civil society, other bodies and the general public are given an opportunity to input during drafting. To ensure public consultation, departments must list the bodies consulted in drawing up the bill in the explanatory memorandum. Although the law is passed by parliament in sittings of the two houses, it is only at cabinet committee level that the details of the draft law are examined. The functioning of the cabinet committees is supported largely by the Forum of South African Directors-General (FOSAD) clusters (Gumede 2008:12-13).

### **3.3 Evolution of a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework in SA**

#### **3.3.1 Introduction**

Until relatively recently, 2005, in SA implementation-based monitoring and evaluation (focused mainly around monitoring inputs and outputs) predominated, particularly in public sector management. Increasingly however, policy makers have shifted their focus from the immediate effects of policy to grappling with how to ensure and measure developmental outcomes that are sustainable in the long term. This broad approach is referred to as Results Based Monitoring and Evaluation (RBM&E), which aims to combine implementation-based monitoring with results, impact or performance monitoring. RBM&E focuses the attention of all stakeholders on the ultimate points of delivery, viz developmental outcomes to the citizens. This implies a continuous process of collecting and analysing information to compare how well a project, programme, or policy is being implemented against expected results (Scott *et al.* 2006:18). **Figure 4** below illustrates an example of a results management framework or logic framework combining both implementation-based and results-based M&E.

**Figure 4: Results Management Framework**

The RBM&E in SA is being driven by the Presidency in partnership with the National Treasury (NT), Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA), PALAMA, Statistic South Africa (Statssa), Office of the Public Service Commission (OPSC) and Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (Cogta). Key initiative advocated by these departments include: Government Wide Monitoring and Evaluation system, which is driven by the Presidency; Framework for Managing Programme Performance Information (FMPPI), which is driven by the NT; Public Management Watch, which is driven by the DPSA; Performance Monitoring and Evaluation System, which is driven by the PSC; and National Statistical System and South African Statistics Quality Assessment Framework (SASQAF), which are driven by the Statssa. These initiatives are discussed below.

### 3.3.2 Regulatory Framework for a M&E Practice in SA

#### 3.2.2.1 Publication of a GWM&E Policy Framework

In pursuit of a results-based performance framework, the Governance and Administration Cluster of government initiated a task team to develop a Government Wide Monitoring and Evaluation

System (GWMES) for national government in 2004. The proposed GWMES aimed to “contribute to improved governance and to enhance the effectiveness of public sector organisations and institutions” (Presidency 2005). This process culminated to the publication of the Government-wide Monitoring and Evaluation (GWM&E) Policy Framework in 2007 by the Presidency. This framework apply to national, provincial and local spheres of government and cover three data terrains: (1) programme performance, (2) evaluations and (3) social, economic and demographic data. These 3 data terrains are spearheaded by different departments (Scott *et al.* 2006: 19).

#### Aim of the GWM&E system

The overarching Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation system aims to: provide an integrated, encompassing framework of M&E principles, practices and standards to be used throughout Government, and function as an apex-level information system which draws from the component systems in the framework to deliver useful M&E products for its users. The GWM&E system is intended to facilitate a clear sequence of events based on critical reflection and managerial action in response to analysis of the relationships between the deployment of inputs, the generation of service delivery outputs, and their associated outcomes and impacts (Presidency 2009:5).

A monitoring and evaluation system is a set of organisational structures, management processes, standards, strategies, plans, indicators, information systems, reporting lines and accountability relationships which enables national and provincial departments, municipalities and other institutions to discharge their M&E functions effectively. In addition to these formal managerial elements are the organisational culture, capacity and other enabling conditions which will determine whether the feedback from the M&E function influence the organisation’s decision-making, learning and service delivery (Presidency 2009:5).

#### The seven principles underpinning the GWM&E System

The Policy framework is based on 7 (seven) principles. That is, M&E should contribute to improved governance, should be rights based, should be development-oriented, should be undertaken ethically and with integrity, should be utilisation oriented, should be methodologically sound, and should be operationally effective. These principles set a standard of framework within which departments M&E systems should be based. Please see **Table 2** below for further explanation of these principles.



**Table 2: Principles of a GWM&ES**

<b>1. M&amp;E should contribute to improved governance</b>	
<b>Transparency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All findings are publicly available unless there are compelling reasons otherwise.</li> </ul>
<b>Accountability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of resources is open to public scrutiny.</li> </ul>
<b>Participation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voice is provided to historically marginalized people.</li> </ul>
<b>Inclusion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traditionally excluded interests are represented throughout M&amp;E processes.</li> </ul>
<b>2. M&amp;E should be rights based</b>	
<b>Bill of Rights</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A rights based culture is promoted and entrenched by its inclusion in the value base for all M&amp;E processes.</li> </ul>
<b>3. M&amp;E should be development-oriented – nationally, institutionally and locally</b>	
<b>Pro-poor orientation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poverty's causes, effects and dynamics are highlighted and the interests of poor people are prioritized above those of more advantaged groups.</li> </ul>
<b>Service delivery and performance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Variables reflecting institutional performance and service delivery are analysed and reviewed, links are identified and responsive strategies are formulated.</li> </ul>
<b>Learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge and an appetite for learning are nurtured in institutions and individuals.</li> </ul>
<b>Human resource management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The skills required for deliberative M&amp;E are available, fostered and retained while the knowledge needed for strategic HR utilisation is available and used.</li> </ul>
<b>Impact awareness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The possible impacts of M&amp;E interventions are considered and reflected upon in plans and their actual outcomes are tracked and analyzed systematically and consistently.</li> </ul>
<b>4. M&amp;E should be undertaken ethically and with integrity</b>	
<b>Confidentiality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Processes ensure the responsible use of personal and sensitive information.</li> <li>• Promises of anonymity and non-identifiability are honoured and relied upon.</li> </ul>
<b>Respect</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dignity and self esteem is built amongst stakeholders and affected people.</li> <li>• There is skilful and sensitive implementation of M &amp; E processes.</li> </ul>
<b>Representation of competence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Those engaged in monitoring and evaluation fairly represent their competence and the limitations of their reports.</li> </ul>
<b>Fair reporting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reporting provides a fair and balanced account of the findings.</li> </ul>
<b>5. M&amp;E should be utilisation oriented</b>	
<b>Defining and meeting expectations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• M&amp;E products meet knowledge and strategic needs.</li> </ul>
<b>Supporting utilisation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A record of recommendations is maintained and their implementation followed up.</li> <li>• An accessible central repository of evaluation reports and indicators is maintained.</li> </ul>
<b>6. M&amp;E should be methodologically sound</b>	
<b>Consistent indicators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Common indicators and data collection methods are used where possible to improve data quality and allow trend analysis.</li> </ul>
<b>Data/evidence based</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Findings are clearly based on systematic evidence and analysis.</li> </ul>
<b>Appropriateness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Methodology matches the questions being asked.</li> </ul>
<b>Triangulated</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiple sources are used to build more credible findings.</li> </ul>

<b>7. M&amp;E should be operationally effective</b>	
<b>Planned</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As an integrated component of public management, M&amp;E is routine and regularized.</li> </ul>
<b>Scope</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The scale of M &amp; E reflects its purpose, level of risk and available resources.</li> </ul>
<b>Managed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conscientious management of the function leads to sustained on-time delivery of excellence.</li> </ul>
<b>Cost effective</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The benefits of M&amp;E are clear and its scale is appropriate given resource availability.</li> </ul>
<b>Systematic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Robust systems are built up that are resilient and do not depend on individuals or chance.</li> </ul>

*Source: Presidency (2007:3)*

The three data terrains underpinning the GWM&E System

GWM&E system is underpinned by three data terrains; namely, Programme Performance Information, Social, Economic and Demographic Statistics (including registers and administrative data); and evaluations. The main feature of each of the data terrains are summarised below:

#### First Terrain: Programme Performance Information

The focus of this component is on information that is collected by government institutions in the course of fulfilling their mandates and implementing the policies of government. These would include output and outcome information collected at provincial level for strategic and annual performance plans and budgets, and at local level for Integrated Development Plans and Service Delivery and Budget Implementation plan. The lead institution responsible for performance information is the National Treasury (presidency 2007:8). Thus in 2008, Treasury published a Framework for Managing Programme Performance Information (FMPPI) with the aim of guiding departments on how to compile their performance reports. Among other things, this Framework aims to clarify definitions and standards for performance information in support of regular audits of such information where appropriate, improve integrated structures, systems and processes required to manage performance information, define roles and responsibilities for managing performance information, and promote accountability and transparency by providing Parliament, provincial legislatures, municipal councils and the public with timely, accessible and accurate performance information (National Treasury 2007:1).

## Second Terrain: Social, economic and demographic statistics

The focus of this component is on information that is collected by Statssa through the census and other surveys, as well as on statistics collected by other government institutions. Within the National Statistics System (NSS) of Statssa, SASQAF distinguishes between “national statistics” and “official statistics”. National statistics are those in the public domain, but which the Statistician General has not certified as “official” in terms of section 14.7(s) of the Statistics Act. These include surveys, registers and administrative data sets emanating from the three spheres of government and other organs of state. The private sector, research institutions and NGOs also generate statistics which are in the public domain and which could exert an influence on policy development or monitoring. These can also be evaluated against SASQAF and the NSS.

For statistics to be certified as “official”, SASQAF requires that three criteria need to be met prior to assessment of the data: (1) the producing agency should be a member of the NSS; (2) the statistics should meet user needs beyond those specific and internal to the producing agency, and (3) the statistics produced should be part of a sustainable series, not a once off collection. Moreover, Statssa defines data quality in terms of fitness to use. Data quality is further defined in terms of prerequisites and the eight dimensions of quality, namely; relevance, accuracy, timeliness, accessibility, interpretability, coherence, methodological soundness, and integrity (Statssa 2008:1-2). SASQAF sets the standard that departments ought to adhere to when producing performance data.

## Third Terrain: Evaluation

The focus of this component is on the standards, processes, and techniques of planning and conducting evaluations and communicating the results of evaluations of government programmes and policies. The aims of the Evaluations Framework are to encourage government institutions to evaluate their programmes on a regular basis, provide guidance on the general approach to be adopted when conducting evaluations, provide for the publication of the results of evaluations. The responsible institution for this terrain is the Presidency. Not much progress had been made in this area until recently when the new Ministry of Performance, Monitoring and Evaluation (PME) was established in 2009.

The Ministry of PME is amongst the new Ministries announced by President JG Zuma on 10 May 2009. In 2009, the Presidency published a Discussion Document on improving government

performance wherein it spells out the new approach to performance management system in government. This Ministry will play an important role in setting expectations of improved outcomes across government. It will drive a results-oriented approach across the three spheres and other organs of state. Among other things, it will review the data architecture of government so that the required performance information is generated. It will ensure that this information is actually used in intergovernmental planning and resource allocation (Presidency 2009:19).

The three main focus areas of the Ministry of Performance, Monitoring and Evaluation will be:

- Management of outcomes through Ministerial accountability for improving delivery performance: The Ministry will play a supporting role in establishing the performance agreements with Ministers and sectoral delivery agreements, focusing on a small set of outcomes and a selected group of outputs. Ministers will cascade results focused lines of accountability down to senior officials. This may also include legislation on programme evaluation and other M&E dimensions.
- Institutionalising the Government-wide Monitoring and Evaluation system: The Ministry's work will build on existing initiatives with a renewed focus on improving input, output and outcome measures. The capacity building strategy for GWM&E will be strengthened to accelerate development of technical skills required for outcomes-focused performance management.
- Unblocking service delivery: The Delivery Unit will assist in a limited number of institutional environments to help turn around blockages and non delivery (Presidency 2009:19).

### **3.3.3 Other GWM&E related initiatives**

#### **3.3.3.1 The Presidency**

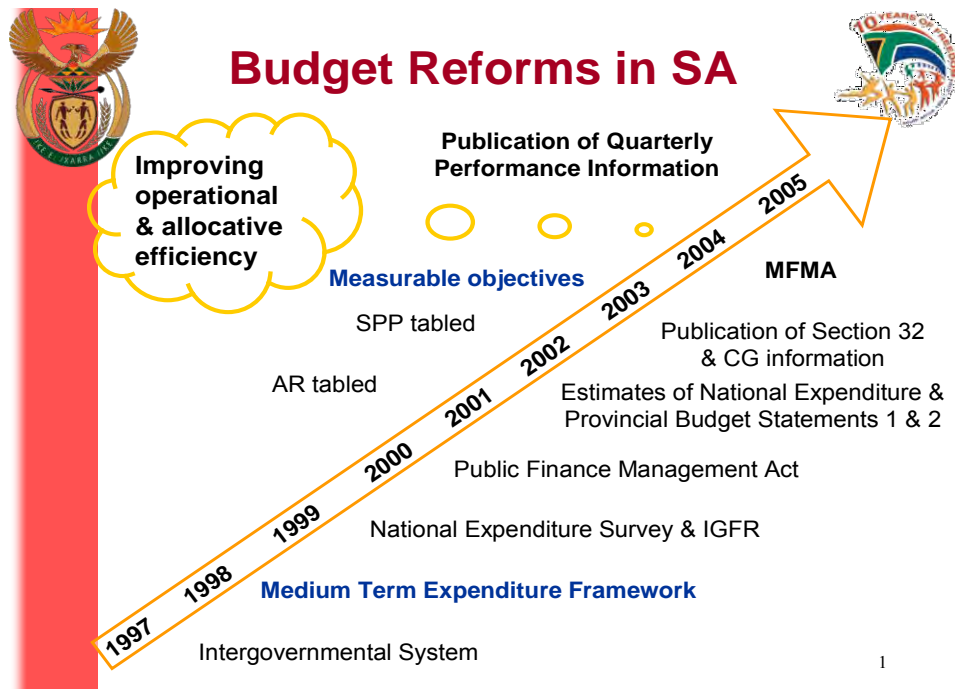
The GWM&ES is pivotal to effective executive decision-making at the centre of government in support of implementation, for informing evidence-based resource allocation and ongoing policy refinement. To this end, the Presidency has created a system of web-based system of bi-monthly report cards for each of the activities in government's Programme of Action (PoA). This forms the basis for bi-monthly reporting to Cabinet which is accessible by the broader public on the Presidency website. The Presidency has also initiated the annual publication of Development Indicators. Departments report on the indicators which are applicable to their sectors. Also, to

promote the dissemination of information and best practices to all M&E practitioners, the Presidency is also supporting the M&E Learning Network (The Presidency, 2007:5).

### **3.3.3.2 National Treasury**

The initially thrust of National Treasury monitoring was financial in nature, manifesting itself as an Early Warning System for national departments, and provincial governments. This gave rise to the In Year Management system which remains a cornerstone of M&E in South Africa. With the enactment of the PFMA, this focus was gradually expanded to include efficiency and effectiveness analysis which therefore require non-financial service delivery information. This broad approach was replicated in the local sphere through the promulgation of the Municipal Finance Management Act of 2003.

Together with the tabling of annual budgets in Parliament and the provincial Legislatures, Ministers and MECs have to table strategic plans and/or annual performance plans for scrutiny and approval. The linking of output measures (in measurable objectives) to the resource allocation in budget programmes and sub-programmes is crucial for creating an orientation towards value for money. These plans and budgets lay the foundation for in-year monthly financial reporting and quarterly performance reporting, as well as year-end annual reports and audited financial statements (The Presidency 2007:6). **Figure 5** below illustrates budget reforms in SA since 1994.

**Figure 5: Budget Reform in South Africa**

Source: National Treasury (2006:1)

### 3.3.3.3 DPSA

The DPSA has set in place a quarterly Public Management Watch, consisting primarily of personnel and payroll data. The thirteen categories of personnel data drawn from PERSAL (such as turnover rates, replacement rates, vacancy rates, leave trends etc) are augmented by two categories of in-year expenditure data (i.e. compensation of employees and expenditure on goods and services), as well as indications of the audit outcomes of national and provincial departments obtained from the National Treasury. DPSA regulations require that departmental annual reports contain detail information regarding posts filled, vacancies, training and other human resource related issues. In addition to the Public Management Watch data, the human resource section of national and provincial departmental annual reports are also analysed to assess human resources performance in the public service. For instance, promotions and merit awards might be analysed in order to understand retention, and this could be correlated with vacancy rates, overtime rates, annual and sick leave taken and use of consultants. National and provincial departments are also required to submit Service Delivery Improvement Plans (SDIP) to DPSA on selected key services. DPSA has developed indicators for monitoring compliance to the Batho Pele principles (The Presidency, 2007: 8).

#### **3.3.3.4 PALAMA**

PALAMA is currently rolling out capacity-building initiatives around M&E for national, provincial and local government. An introductory course on M&E was launched in 2007 in order to raise awareness around M&E related issues. A higher-level course, comprising 6 modules is being rolled out specifically for M&E practitioners in government (PALAMA Strategic Plan 2009:14).

#### **3.3.3.5 The Public Service Commission**

The aim of the OPSC is to promote the constitutional values and principles of public administration in the public service. It plays a key role in promoting good governance in the South African public service. Its main objective is promoting a culture of good governance, accountability and transparency. In carrying out its mandate, the OPSC's ongoing focus areas are: guiding and improving public service labour relations and the role of various role players in human resource management, leadership and performance improvement; and eradicating corruption in the public service. Monitoring and evaluation is the main tool for assessing service delivery and quality assurance. A transversal public service monitoring and evaluation system was developed to generate performance data. The system assesses the extent to which departments comply with the nine values and principles of public administration contained in the Constitution. The system has been in operation for five years, during which it was applied in 54 departments (17 national and 37 provincial) (National Treasury, 2008: 117-118).

#### **3.3.3.6 The role of the Premiers' offices in GWM&E**

Premiers' Offices play a pivotal role in providing coherent strategic leadership and coordination in provincial policy formulation and review, planning and overseeing service delivery planning and implementation in support of provincial and national priorities and plans. Effective M&E could therefore contribute substantially to the achievement of Premier's Office objectives (Presidency 2008:2).

The South African intergovernmental system is decentralised, with three inter-dependent, inter-related but distinct spheres of government. This introduces a considerable amount of complexity to policy formulation and implementation, as well as M&E. In concurrent functions, it is not uncommon for policy to be set by one sphere of government while budgeting and implementation

for that function takes place within another sphere of government. This complexity requires intensive sectoral, intergovernmental, functional and spatial coordination across the policy making, planning, budgeting and implementation processes. Furthermore, joint work (in the form of collaborative programmes, projects and services across the three spheres of government) is becoming increasingly important. Joint work creates a compelling requirement for collaborative M&E (Presidency 2008:2).

The above initiatives generally cover the milestones on the evolution of a Results-Based Monitoring and evaluation approach in SA. It is encouraging to note that the new administration acknowledges the challenges that have led to poor policy implementation and performance. For instance in its Draft Document on Measurable and Accountable Delivery (Presidency 2010:5), the Presidency makes the following acknowledgment:

- —“Since 1994 we have made some progress in many areas of work. Government has successfully improved access to services and increased its expenditure on service delivery; however, this did not always translate into better outcomes. We would have expected that increasing expenditure and increasing activities should produce outputs and outcomes; however, this did not happen for various reasons”.

Reasons advanced in this document for poor policy outcomes include: incorrect policies, poor implementation of policies, incorrect assumptions regarding the links between inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes, absence of performance management systems and monitoring and evaluation framework, and institutional arrangement that often led to poor policy coordination.

The last section of this study discusses the role of parliament in relation to its oversight role. Parliament plays an important role in holding the Executive or Cabinet accountable as well as in passing or rejecting legislations.

### **3.4 The prevailing accountability framework in SA**

#### **3.4.1 The role of Parliament**

According to Section 92 (2) of the Constitution, members of the Cabinet are accountable collectively and individually to Parliament for the exercise of the powers and the performance of their functions. Thus, at the highest level the national legislative authority in South Africa is vested in parliament, which consists of two houses: the National Assembly (NA) and the National



Council of Provinces (NCOP). The Constitution describes the NA as a body elected to represent the people and to ensure government by the people. While its functions include holding the executive accountable; fulfilling the judicial role; and those relating to its own activities; and considering public petitions from the members of the public, the most important purpose of the NA is to pass legislation.

In exercising its legislative power, the NA may consider, pass, amend or reject any legislation before it, and/or initiate or prepare legislation, except the Money Bill. The NA is required to provide for mechanisms to ensure that all executive organs of state in the national sphere of government are accountable to it, and to maintain oversight of the exercise of national executive authority, including the implementation of legislation, as well as that of any organ of state. The NA is also required to facilitate public involvement in its legislative and other processes and its committees, conduct its business in an open manner, and hold its sittings and those of its committees in public.

The NCOP ensures that provincial interests are taken into account in the national sphere of government. It carries out this mandate by participating in the national legislative processes and providing a national forum for public consideration of issues affecting the provinces. In exercising its legislative power, the NCOP may consider, pass, amend, propose amendments to or reject any legislation before it, and initiate or prepare legislation falling within a functional area. The NCOP is also required by law to facilitate public involvement in its legislative and other processes and its committees in a regulated manner. It is clear from the above discussion that Parliament, under the democratic regime, holds a lot of power. The question that has arose, however, is why parliament has been economic in utilizing its authority in the recent past. One possible contribution to this situation is the nature of the current electoral system.

### **3.4.2 Electoral System and Political Accountability**

The report of the independent panel assessment of Parliament (2009:5) argues that in any Parliamentary system, oversight can only be effective if Parliament asserts its independence and embraces the authority conferred on it by the Constitution. There are various mechanisms which Parliament may use to hold the Executive to account, but it is the integrity, independence and authority with which these mechanisms are applied that will ultimately determine the extent to which oversight contributes to improved governance. The report further argues that the perceived

lack of accountability of Members of Parliament to the public, as well as the poor link between the public and Parliament in general, can be ascribed to South Africa's party-list electoral system.

South Africa's current electoral system encourages Members of Parliament to be accountable to their party rather than the electorate. The influence of political parties on the ability of Members of Parliament to freely express themselves is further strengthened by the unconditional power of political parties to remove their members from Parliament. Section 47(3)(c) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa specifies that a person loses membership of the National Assembly if that person...—cases to be a member of the party that nominated that person as a member of the Assembly. In addition, these factors also have an impact on Parliament's mandate to serve as a forum for the discussion of issues of national importance. In a speech delivered at a 2002 Freedom of Information Conference former Speaker of the National Assembly Dr. Frene Ginwala said that this —esignation provision" could be viewed as restricting member rights to free speech in that they may feel obliged to —dw the party line" (The report of the independent panel assessment of Parliament, 2009:8).

This provision of the constitution, indeed, compels Members of Parliament to be accountable to their political parties rather than to electorate. Thus, Parliament's mandate to serve as a forum for the discussion of issues of national importance is compromised. This is a setback to the much publicised positive developments especially with the supposedly participatory nature of the policy making process in SA. Two decisions that have clearly questioned the participatory nature of the policy-making process relate to the appointment of the defunct SABC Board by the then President Thabo Mbeki in 2008 as well as to the disbanding of the Directorate of Special Operations (Scorpions). An excerpt in Box 1 from the Business Day Newspaper of 31 July 2008 sums everything to the contrary of the participatory culture in policy making.

**Box 1: Disbanding of the Directorate of Special Operations**

CAPE TOWN — Despite vowing that Parliament would pass legislation to scrap the Scorpions, senior African National Congress (ANC) MPs yesterday rejected suggestions that a planned campaign of public consultation was a charade designed to keep them out of the Constitutional Court. Safety and security committee chairwoman Maggie Sotyu, justice committee chairman Yunus Carrim, select committee on security chairman Sicelo Shiceka and justice committee

whip Bulelani Magwanishe dismissed as untrue reports of a huge negative response to the committee from the public.

Opening a news conference in Parliament, Sotyú said she had a summary of submissions received, and the reports of “tens of thousands” were simply “not true”. Sotyú confirmed, however, that 79000 signatures had been received on petitions along with about 1000 written submissions, 35 of which had requested to make oral submissions at public hearings. “Petitions that simply say no to the bills are not assisting us,” she said. “We are going to dissolve the Scorpions as it is our position to implement the policies of the ruling party.”

This prompted a barrage of questions about the point of the committee holding public hearings in Cape Town, Western Cape, and the eight other provinces if the decision to approve the South African Police Service Amendment Bill and the National Prosecuting Authority Amendment Bill had already been taken based on the Polokwane conference resolution of the ANC.

Asked about recent Constitutional Court rulings on public participation being the reason for the expanded programme of public hearings and not a genuine desire to hear other opinions, Carrim said that not every decision was subject to “populism”. He said there were times, as with issues such as abortion, the death penalty and gay rights, that public opinion should not determine the outcome. He defended the move, saying the ANC had taken the decision to dissolve the Scorpions as was its democratic right. He effectively confirmed that public submissions would not block the decision to dissolve the unit, but could influence the way in which it was done.

Opposition Democratic Alliance MP Dianne Kohler Barnard, whose party has been at the forefront of gathering petitions against the proposed legislation, said the views expressed at the conference “displayed the ANC’s complete and utter contempt for the legitimacy of public participation and the parliamentary processes involved in the drafting of legislation”.

“The decision to disband the Directorate of Special Operations (Scorpions) by absorbing the unit into the SAPS was once again presented by the ANC as a fait accompli, the implementation of which cannot and will not be in any way swayed by public opposition to the move — however vast it may be,” said Kohler Barnard.

Without passing a judgment on the merit of the decision to disband the DSO, one is however left with no option but to conclude that the participatory nature of the policy making process is

flawed. It is clear that the ruling party used its majority to push its decision through parliament. Without discounting strides that have been made in terms of transforming the policy fabric of SA, policy processes are still a preserve of the few as was the case with the previous regime.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

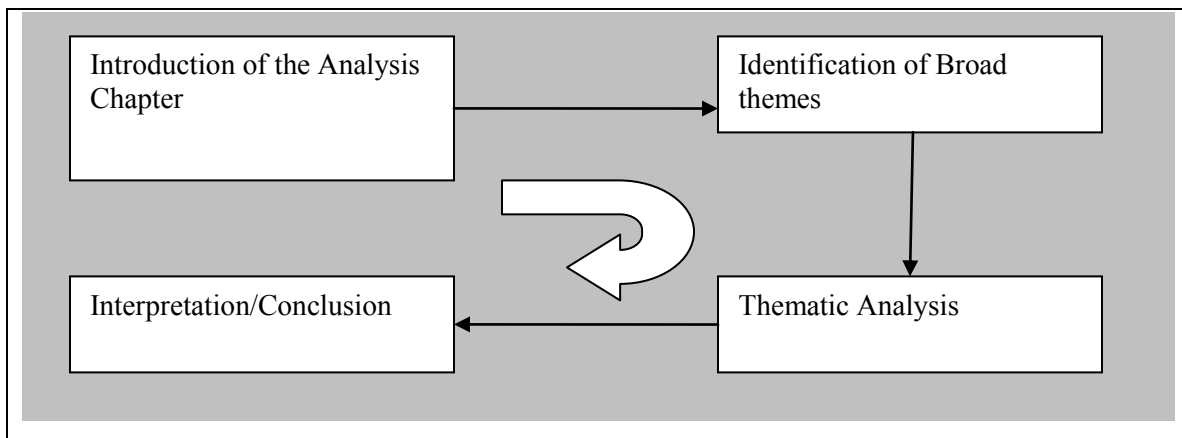
The chapter has established that major milestones have been achieved in transforming the policy management landscape in SA. The biggest question that this study seeks to explore, going forward, is whether these achievements have been translated into action. That is, for instance, has the introduction of the GWM&E system improved policy evaluation in government? Are the departments producing reliable performance information since the introduction of this outcomes approach? Where improvements have not been recorded, efforts would be made, in this study, to identify the gaps. Subsequently, recommendations will be made based on the findings (chapter 4) of the study.

## CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

### 4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present solid descriptive data, summary and interpretation of the findings and conclusions in respect of the findings. Therefore this chapter will be focusing not only on analysing data, but also on the interpretations thereof and the subsequent meaning. In other words, data will be described, classified and interpreted throughout this chapter. As indicated in Chapter 1 (Research design), this chapter presents information gathered from a range of interviewees who have a direct and indirect involvement in the evaluation of government policies or programmes. The researcher conducted 40 in-depth interviews with individuals from different national government departments. A thematic analysis of these interviews is presented in the next section. The layout of this chapter can be presented as follows:

**Figure 6: Illustration of the Sequence of Chapter 4**



### 4.2 Generation of Themes and Categories

In order to answer the main question of this study; which is, what strides have been made by the South African Government towards an outcomes-based policy evaluation framework, relevant literature was reviewed which informed the theoretical framework of the study as well as the set of questions that were asked to interviewees. Key themes emerged from the data during literature review and interviews. These themes directly address initial research objectives. In this chapter, through a thematic analysis of the interview data, the researcher seeks to:

- Present broad thematic issues that have emerged from the data

- Present an analysis of the emerging policy evaluation framework in South Africa, and
- Interpret findings

This chapter is therefore divided into three broad thematic sections; that is:

- The extent to which the prevailing evaluation system in government is based on an outcomes approach
- The nature of the evidence system in which the prevailing evaluation system in government is embedded
- The extent to which the prevailing accountability framework is able to sustain utilisation of scientifically generated evidence.

These themes overlap to some extent but taken together they provide a comprehensive overview of the reasons behind the state of performance information in the assessed government departments. While the first two themes deal with the supply side of evaluation, the third theme deals with the demand side of evaluation. Each thematic section covers a broad theme, associated questions and findings.

### **4.3 Thematic Analysis**

#### **4.3.1 The Prevailing Evaluation System**

Literature suggests that, when building or strengthening government monitoring and evaluation systems, it is important to start with a diagnosis of what M&E functions currently exist and their strengths and weaknesses, on both the demand and supply sides (Mackay 2008:176). Thus, the starting point for this study was to investigate the form that the emerging evaluation system in government is taking. Mackay (2008:169) further contends that country-led systems of M&E are a concept whose time has come. A growing number of developing and transition countries and most if not all developed countries are devoting considerable attention and effort to their national M&E systems. Many do not label it as such – it may be called evidence-based policy-making, performance-based budgeting, or results-based management (RBM), for example – but at the core is an evidentiary system for public sector management that relies on the regular collection of monitoring information and the regular conduct of evaluations

It emerged from the literature review that developments in this area are quite recent in South Africa. They can be traced back to the publication of the Government-wide Policy Framework on Monitoring and Evaluation in 2007. This is an overarching policy framework that ushers a new

culture on monitoring and evaluation in government and is predicated on a RBM approach. Thus this theme casts some light on the first research objective of this study, which is to explore the extent to which departments apply the Government-wide Policy Framework on Monitoring and Evaluation. In assessing the extent to which the prevailing evaluation system in government is based on an outcomes approach, the following questions were asked to interviewees:

- Does your department have an evaluation system in place to evaluate its policies, and if so, how would you describe this evaluation system?
- If your department does not have a policy evaluation system in place, what guides it in assessing and reporting on the performance of its policies?
- In 2007 The Presidency published a Government-wide Policy Framework for the Monitoring and Evaluation System. How does the evaluation system in your department comply with this policy framework?
- Has the introduction of this policy framework altered the manner in which your department evaluates its performance? Please substantiate your answer.
- How does the evaluation system of your department enable or hinder the department to account on the performance of its policies?
- How would you describe the type of performance data in your department; is it input, output or outcome bias? Please substantiate your answer.

Findings on the above questions are presented below

**Question One: Does your department have an evaluation system in place to evaluate its policies, and if so, how would you describe this evaluation system?**

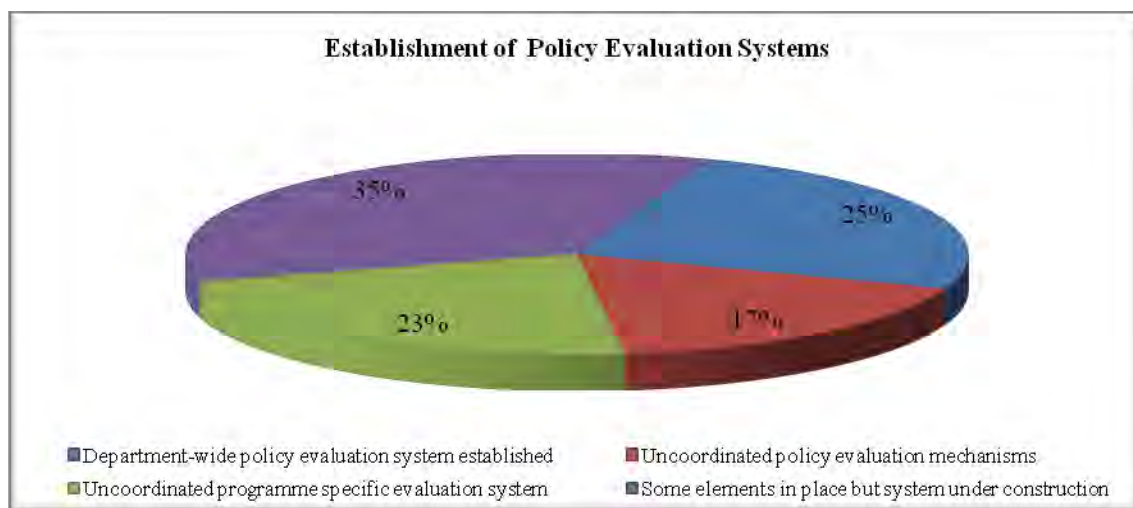
The purpose of this question was to ascertain the extent to which government departments have succeeded in establishing policy evaluation systems. Question 2, is also subsumed in this question (question one) since it assist the researcher in categorizing forms of evaluation system that exists in departments. Literature reviewed suggests that successful institutionalisation of an evaluation system is key to deciding whether the organisation has an effective system or not (Mackay 2007 and Segone 2008).

Based on the information provided by the interviewees, responses were then organised into four categories. They are: Department-wide policy evaluation system established, uncoordinated policy evaluation mechanisms, uncoordinated programme/project specific evaluation systems and some elements in place but system under construction. Findings of this study point to a very

gloomy picture on the effectiveness of policy evaluation systems in government. Of the 40 participants, 25% provided answers which indicate that their departments have successfully established policy evaluation systems; meaning that the application of evaluation system principles in such departments was department-wide and applied uniformly.

Other interviewees provided information that point to the uneven application of policy evaluation practices. For instance, 17% of the interviewees provided information which suggests that policy evaluations are done on ad hoc basis (uncoordinated policy evaluation mechanisms); while 23% of the interviewees provided information which point to uncoordinated programme specific evaluations; and 35% of the interviewees provided information that point to non-existence of an evaluation system in any form. This last category is made up of interviewees who believe that their departments do not have evaluation plans and mechanisms in place for either programmes or policies that they implement. Interviewees pointed that their evaluation systems or frameworks were either at a conceptual or draft phase and had not as yet been officially adopted by the department to guide evaluation in the department. This analysis is further illustrated in **Graph 1** below. Relevant quotes which are representative of the views of the participants are also provided in **Box 2** below as a form of evidence for the findings on this question.

**Graph 1: Establishment of a Policy Evaluation System**





**Box 2: Quotes on the establishment of Policy Evaluation Systems**

**The following responses signal that the departments have established policy evaluation systems:**

- The department has an evaluation system in place. The Department has developed Evaluation Guidelines to give guidance on the processes to be followed when evaluating its policies and programmes, including tools for collecting data on important indicators to monitor programme.
- There is an evaluation system in place that aims to assess the department's performance in three areas of responsibility. That is, fiscal discipline which deals with government behavior in relation to the economy, allocative efficiency which deals with budget allocation processes and operational efficiency which deals with assessing efficient use of resources or expenditure – value for money. The department has a functional evaluation system at a fiscal level but the level of success for allocative and operational efficiency is limited.
- Though the M&E system is not fully operational in the department, key elements of the evaluation system are in place. For instance, every policy that is produced by the department gets reviewed every five year. Impact assessments are carried out for every policy.

**The following responses signal that the departments do not have policy evaluation systems but have uncoordinated mechanisms:**

- No explicit evaluation system exists. However, on an in-year basis, problems and issues experienced across the three spheres of government dictate that current policies and frameworks require *re-thinking* and reform. This re-thinking or reform sometimes takes the form of new research and analysis and at other times, direct legislative amendments, etc.
- In some cases, anecdotal evidence is used to inform policy evaluation. In other instances, research informs policy review processes. There is no explicit guide; however, reports that are compiled from time to time which are geared to assessing a variety of service delivery issues which in turn indirectly gives an indication on the performance of policies. In other instances, indications of the performance of policies are brought to the awareness of the department through correspondence from individuals and institutions which seek to inform the department of either non-

compliance with policy and legislation and or the need to consider matters not as yet regulated by law.

- No; the current system is not centralized and organised in a way that would give proper feedback. Everyone does as they see fit – according to their M&E knowledge or school of thought. Different units have different systems that are specific to their needs. All sorts of systems are in place in different units in the department. The department does not have a formalized or integrated policy evaluation system, but rather each branch has customized tools that are applied for programme level performance evaluation, the findings of which are fed into the policy assessment and review functions of a Chief Directorate dedicated to policy and information management
- I do not think our department has an operational evaluation system as proposed in the GWM&ES. It is not in place as yet. At the moment, the department does policy reviews more than evaluations. The interviewee conceded that the difference between evaluation and review is not always clear. However, he emphasized that while policy evaluation and policy review may serve similar purpose of generating performance information, their focus is slightly different. Policy reviews are normally carried out to consider current policy status, are largely concern with what went well and they are not linked to any monitoring system. Policy evaluations on the other hand answer the question; ‘\_was it worth it’ and their (evaluations) success depend on the existence of a monitoring system.

**The following responses signal that evaluation systems in the departments are under-construction:**

- The department has just completed a draft Monitoring and Evaluation framework for consultation.
- No, the department is currently working on the development of a monitoring and evaluation instrument that will assist in the evaluation of policies that are being developed and implemented

- There is nothing documented so far but we are in the stage of developing one. Safe to say the system is only at its primary application phase
- No, there are draft evaluation standard evaluation guidelines in the department. There are very few, if any policies which have been evaluated in the department.
- The department is currently developing a department-wide monitoring and evaluation policy framework and system, which intends to align both organisational and individual performance (through the balanced scorecard approach), but also seeks to integrate policy review and to evaluate the efficacy of policies.

**Question Two: In 2007 the Presidency published a Government-wide Policy Framework for the Monitoring and Evaluation System. Does the evaluation system in your department comply with this policy framework? Please substantiate your answer.**

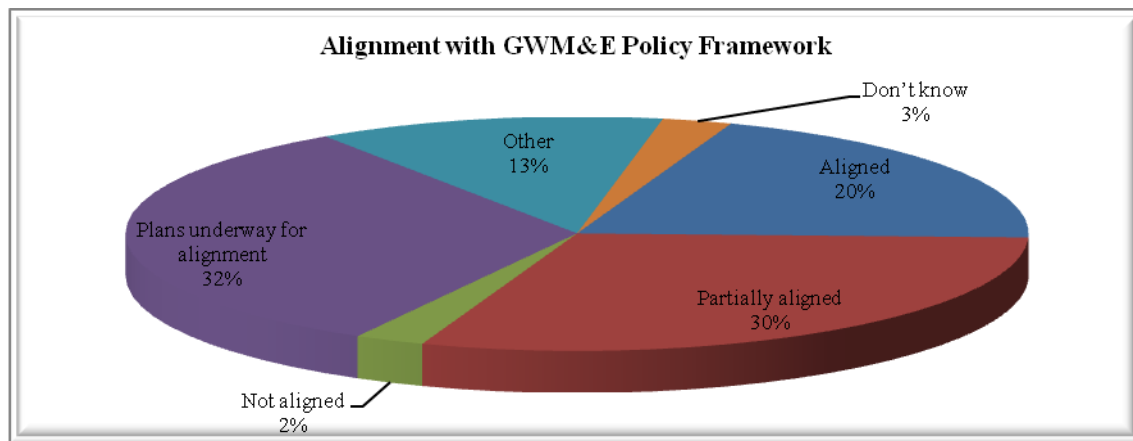
The purpose of this question was to establish if departments are establishing evaluation systems that are aligned to the GWM&E policy framework. It is important for the departments to align their systems to the GWM&E policy framework since the framework seeks to standardise evaluation throughout government; the framework also advocate for an outcomes-based approach as well as for the standardisation of performance management systems. Thus the evaluation system of a department is aligned to the GWM&E policy framework if its information management system is outcomes based and collects reliable performance information.

Based on the information provided by the interviewees, responses were then organised into 6 categorizes. They are: Aligned, partially aligned, not aligned, plans underway, other and don't know. It is not surprising that only 20% of the interviewees provided information which suggests that their departments' evaluation systems are aligned to the GWM&E policy framework. This is logical given that only 25% of the 40 interviewees suggested that their departments have successfully established policy evaluation systems. It is clear that most departments are still in the building phase as 32% interviewees provided information that points to plans that are underway which are aimed at aligning policy evaluation system to the GWM&E policy framework.

The other important statistics is the one that points to the existence of evaluation systems that are partially aligned to the GWM&E Policy framework, 30% responses. In this case, departments vary on the progress made towards the alignment of their evaluation systems; 13% of responses

constitute the other group. Responses of this group (other) suggest that their departments' evaluation systems preceded the GWM&ES yet they are also based on the same principles of an outcomes based approach. Only 1 (3%) interviewee could not ascertain the state of his department's evaluation system. This analysis is further illustrated in **Graph 2** below. Relevant quotes which are representative of the views of the participants are also provided in **Box 3** below as a form of evidence for the findings on this question.

**Graph 2: Alignment with the GWM&E Policy Framework**



**Box 3: Quotes on the alignment of the departments' evaluation systems with the GWM&E Policy Framework**

**The following responses signal that evaluation systems of the department are aligned to the GWM&E Policy Framework**

- In drafting the departmental evaluation guidelines, the GWM&E Policy Framework served as a primary reference document i.e. departmental evaluation systems comply with the GWM&E Policy Framework.
- The 2007 framework serves as a point of departure in both the evolution of departmental policies on M&E and attendant development of monitoring and evaluation instruments. The developmental and corrective thrusts in the Government –wide M&E framework underpin the departmental M&E practices
- The evaluation system is based on the prescripts of the Government wide Policy Framework; where the framework has enabled the department to modify its own framework to achieve uniformity, especially around terminology.

**The following responses signal that evaluation systems of the department are partially aligned to the GWM&E Policy Framework**

- It is aligned to it, though certain variations between the two systems exist. The Presidency one is more applicable to departments whose data is easily collected, like Department of Education, South African Police, and Home Affairs etc. as compared to our department which is more about developing policies and implementation is done by other government entities
- The new approach, though at an infancy level, comply with the framework. It is largely driven by the outcomes of the turnaround strategy.

**The following responses signal that plans are underway to align evaluation systems of the departments with the GWM&E Policy Framework**

- We have a Monitoring and Evaluation Unit which has historically focused on reporting on the 5 year Strategic Agenda. There is ongoing work to integrate with the M and E system at the Presidency.
- The monitoring and evaluation instrument that is currently being developed is based on the principles as outlined in the Government –wide Monitoring and Evaluation Policy Framework; therefore once completed, it is expected to fully comply.
- The department has a Regulatory Impact Assessment business unit (RIA) that is currently working on aligning policy evaluations to an outcomes approach as envisioned in the GWM&E policy framework. This process is still at an infant phase.

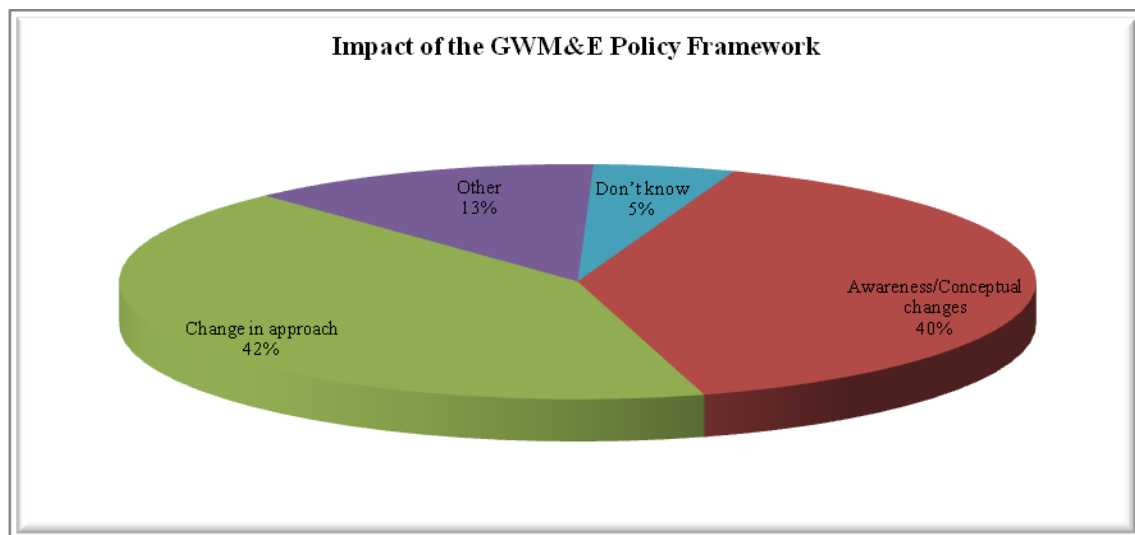
**Question Three: Has the introduction of this policy framework altered the manner in which your department evaluates its performance? Please substantiate your answer.**

The purpose of this question was to assess the extent to which the introduction of the GWM&E policy framework has impacted on the manner in which departments evaluate their policies. Based on the information provided by the interviewees, responses were then organised into 4 categories. They are: conceptual change, change in implementation approach, other and don't know. Findings in this regard suggest that the GWM&E policy framework has had limited success in changing the manner in which departments conduct evaluation. This is based on the fact that only 42% of the 40 interviewees provided information that suggest that their departments

have already changed their evaluation approach (conceptually and implementation wise) following the introduction of the GWM&E policy framework.

On the other hand 40% interviewees provided information which point to conceptual changes in the department which have not translated to actual implementation of an outcomes-based approach. Most of the interviewees in this category indicated that their evaluation systems or frameworks were still at a draft form and had not been officially approved by the department. The other 13% of the interviewees indicated that their departments' evaluation systems preceded the GWM&E policy framework; therefore their success could not be attributed to the introduction of the GWM&E policy framework. Only 5% of the interviewees indicated that they did not know if the introduction of the GWM&E policy framework has had any impact on how their departments evaluate policies. This analysis is further illustrated in **Graph 3** below. Relevant quotes which are representative of the views of the participants are also provided in **Box 4** below as a form of evidence for the findings on this question.

**Graph 3: Impact of the GWM&E Policy Framework**



<p><b>Box 4: Quotes on the impact of the GWM&amp;E Policy Framework at departmental level</b></p>
<p><b>The following responses signal that the evaluation approach of the department have changed since the introduction of the GWM&amp;E Policy Framework</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the past M&amp;E used to be understood as an inspection function than a developmental intervention to ensure that programme managers get support through early warning reports. Now the orientation is primarily a developmental one where results and findings can be appreciated by all involved i.e. monitors/evaluators and programme managers.</li> <li>• It has assisted the department on ensuring that there is alignment in how it monitors and reports performance across the three spheres of government. Even the draft indicators which were developed by the department have been aligned to ensure that municipalities report on national priorities, such as the Millennium Development Goals.</li> </ul>
<p><b>The following responses signal that impact has only been limited to conceptual changes at departmental level</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The framework has increased and heightened the awareness for improving the monitoring and evaluation in the department. However, capacity and institutional arrangements do not as yet make for the consolidation of M and E in the department at a higher technological and research level.</li> <li>• It has created some awareness in the department, which has obviously led to the establishment of the Chief Directorate responsible for M&amp;E that deals with programme output evaluations.</li> <li>• Not much change can be attributed to the framework but conceptually, the framework has affected the department in a sense that the draft evaluation framework is based on the GWM&amp;ES principles.</li> </ul>

**Question 4: How does the evaluation system of your department enable or hinder the department to account on the performance of its policies?**

The purpose of this question was to assess the extent to which the evaluation system of the department is able to produce credible and reliable performance information through which departments could account on whether their policy objectives have been met or not. Pollitt (2006:39) defines performance information as systematic information describing the outputs and

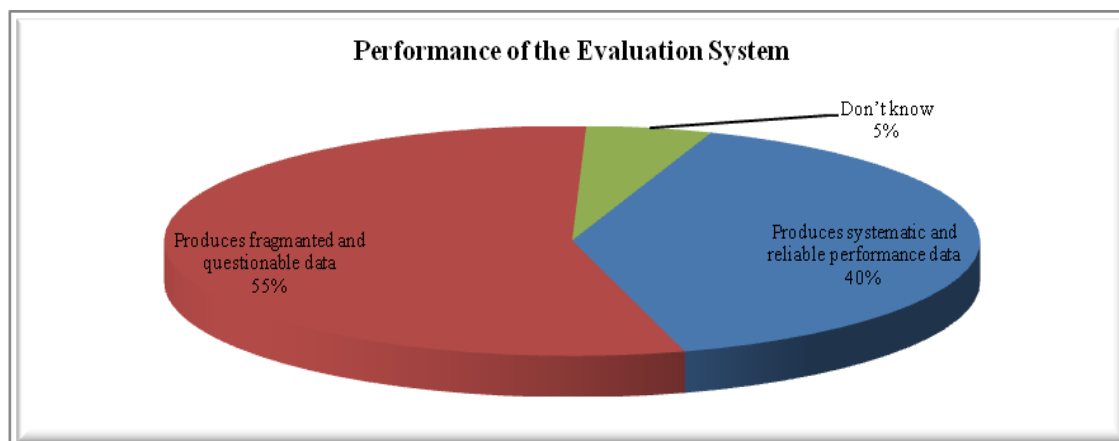
outcomes of public policies, programmes generated by systems and processes intended to produce such information.

Based on the information provided by the interviewees, responses were then organised into 3 categories. They are: the system produces systematic and reliable performance data, the system produces fragmented and questionable performance data and don't know. Information generated based on the interviewees' answers seems to suggest that evaluation systems in the assessed departments are far from being able to generate performance information that enhances departments' ability to account on the performance of their policies. There is a plethora of evaluation systems using different definitions and periodicity.

The quality of performance information generated through such evaluation systems varies depending on the strengths and weaknesses of these systems. Evaluation systems or framework and practices range from the Programme of Action (POA), mid-term reviews, policy reviews, expenditure reviews, Regulatory impact assessments, peer review mechanisms, longitudinal surveys, cross-sectional surveys and poverty impact analysis. However, only 40% of the 40 interviewees provided information which suggests that their departments were generating systematic and reliable performance information which, if effectively used by management, would enhance departments' ability to account on their policies.

The overwhelming 55% interviewees provided information which point to the generation of fragmented and questionable performance data. Most interviewees attributed the generation of fragmented performance data to the non existence of department-wide evaluation systems whereby uniform application of evaluation standards could be enforced. The other 5% of the interviewees did not know whether or not their departments' evaluation systems were generating systematic and reliable performance data. This analysis is further illustrated in **Graph 4** below. Relevant quotes which are representative of the views of the participants are also provided in **Box 5** below as a form of evidence for the findings on this question.



**Graph 4: Performance of the Evaluation System****Box 5: Quotes on the effectiveness of departmental Policy Evaluation Systems**

**The following responses signal that the evaluation system of the departments enable them to account on performance of their policies**

- The evaluation system enables the department to deliver on its mandate. Through this system, the department is able to assess whether departments are complying with key principles of the Constitution. This is a response from the Public Service Commission interviewee. The Commission is responsible for assessing whether or not government departments are complying with the 9 constitutional principles.
- It enables the department to report on its achievements through policy reviews, and other monitoring and evaluation tools that are aimed at assessing performance of government-wide policies.

**The following responses signal that the evaluation system of the departments hinder them to account on performance of their policies**

- M&E function in the department has not been optimally conceptualized and institutionalised. The collection and analysis of output and outcome data and information are rather inadequate and not well managed. Also, the quality and completeness of administrative data are inadequate and unreliable (too many indicators in the current M&E system which have to be populated and verified), and quality control is generally poor.
- Limited capacity hinders the timeous verification of the collection of data. Data

collection to assess policy performance is dependent on submissions by other spheres of government.

- The quality of performance data in the department is generally inadequate and unreliable. Performance data in the department is largely focused on outputs and not much on outcomes (and impacts). Units continue to collect data in a rather fragmented manner.

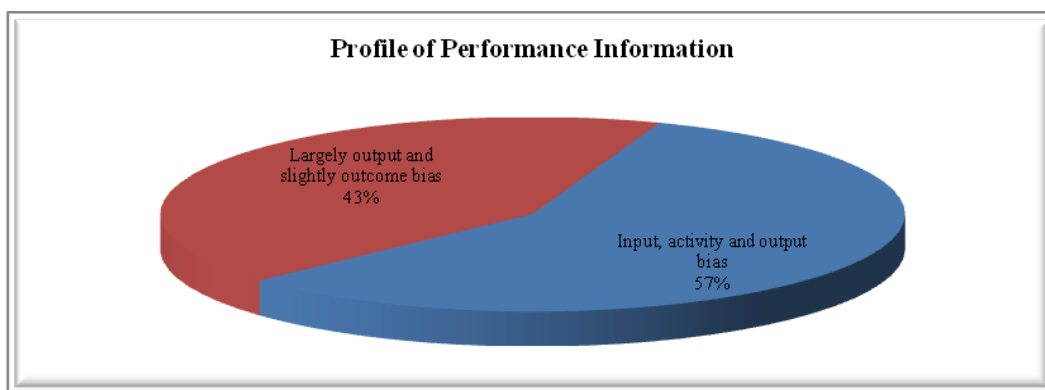
**Question Five: How would you describe the type of performance data in your department; inputs (resources/expenditure), activity (things that the organisation do or processes) outputs (products/deliverables) and outcomes (results or changes as a result of products delivered) bias? Please substantiate your answer.**

The purpose of this question was to assess the extent to which the introduction of the GWM&E Policy Framework has impacted on the profile of performance information in departments. There is a general understanding that for a government to improve its own performance information it needs to devote substantial effort to establishing its performance management systems; key amongst them is the evaluation system.

Based on the information provided by the interviewees, responses were then organised into 3 categories. They are: input-activity-output bias performance data, largely output but less outcomes bias performance data, and fully outcomes-based approach; meaning the evaluation system generates performance information throughout the value chain – from inputs to outcomes. Findings of this study suggest that efforts devoted by government to improving departments' evaluation systems have not resulted in substantial shifts from implementation to results/outcomes-based evaluation systems. To that effect 57% of the 40 interviewees provided information which paints a picture of departments who produce implementation related performance data (inputs, activities and outputs data). Even where improvements have been recorded (43%) focus is still largely on outputs and very little attention is paid on outcomes. These findings confirm Perrin's (2006:20) observation, who noted that until recently, the performance of public sector programs, and of their managers, has been judged largely on inputs/expenditure, activities, and outputs.

These findings are also in line with what Schacter (1993:1) has raised; he contends that public sector performance has often been measured in terms of what the government has done, meaning an amount of funding provided, number of kilometers of road tarred, number of new hospital beds and so forth. Such measures focus on how “*busy*” the government has been rather than on what it has achieved. They highlight means rather than ends. Importance of a system that is results-based is well captured by Sandahl (1993:139) who observed that many people regard the creation of better results-information systems as one of the most important factors in the transformation of the public sector from a system controlled by regulations into one more oriented towards results. This analysis is further illustrated in **Graph 5** below. Relevant quotes which are representative of the views of the participants are also provided in **Box 6** below as a form of evidence for the findings on this question.

**Graph 5: Profile of Performance Information**



**Box Six: Quotes on the profile of performance Information in departments**

**The following responses signal that the profile of the departments' performance information is largely comprised of inputs, activities and outputs**

- The performance data is mainly output rather than outcome bias.
- The state of performance data is biased towards quantitative outputs. The data is more on statistical achievements of our policies e.g. the number of hectares distributed through various land reform policies.
- It seems to be mainly input, activity and output biased. This is largely because M&E plans are not designed as part and parcel of policy and strategy formulation processes. Sets of indicators with timelines for measuring inputs, outputs, outcomes and impacts, at

different levels (national, provincial and local levels) are not considered and developed in the policy/strategy design phase. The lack of properly designed M&E plans for policy implementation therefore makes it difficult, if not impossible, to accurately assess policy success and failures over time at the various operational levels

**The following responses signal that the profile of the departments' performance information is largely comprised of outputs and, to a lesser extent, outcomes**

- The state of performance data in our department focuses primarily on input and output as well as a little bit of outcomes.
- Performance data is mainly output bias. There is over reliance on what has been done with minimal emphasis on the outcome or impact thereof.

#### **4.3.1.1 Summary of key findings for theme one**

What can we conclude from the overview of the first theme, which focused on the extent to which the prevailing evaluation system in government is based on an outcomes-based approach? Findings of this study on the extent to which the prevailing evaluation system in government is based on an outcomes-based approach could be summarized as follows:

- The success rate in terms of establishment of uniform or department-wide policy evaluation is disappointingly low; only 25% of the interviewees indicated that their departments have established department-wide evaluation systems. This in turn compromises the quality of performance information that is collected by fragmented means.
- Generally, the emerging policy evaluation systems are not aligned to the GWM&E policy framework. The inability of most of the departments to align their evaluation systems with the GWM&E policy framework has a direct impact on the nature and quality of performance information that is generated.
- GWM&E policy framework has had limited success in changing the manner in which departments conduct evaluation; only 42% of the interviewees provided information that suggested that their departments had already changed their evaluation approach (conceptually and implementation-wise) following the introduction of the GWM&E policy framework.
- Departments are far from being able to generate performance information that enhances departments' ability to account on the performance of their policies. To this effect 55% of

the interviewees provided information which point to the generation of fragmented and questionable performance data. Most interviewees attributed the generation of fragmented performance data to the non existence of department-wide evaluation systems whereby uniform application of evaluation standards could be enforced. The other factor attributed to generation of fragmented and questionable performance data is the capacity of employees who are assigned the responsibility to generate performance information.

- Efforts devoted by government to improving departments' evaluation systems have not resulted to substantial shifts from implementation to results/outcomes-based evaluation systems. One of the reasons attributed to the persistence of implementation-based evaluation systems in departments is the fact that sets of indicators with timelines for measuring inputs, outputs, outcomes and impacts are not considered and developed during the policy design phase. That is, programme theories and logic models are not clearly articulated during the policy making phase.

#### **4.3.2 The Prevailing Evidence-Based System**

The second theme focuses on practices and mechanisms that need to be in place for evidence-based government to occur. It deals with methods for gathering and appraising evidence in government. Thus this theme casts some light on the second research objective, which is to explore the manner in which government departments generate and use evidence throughout the policy lifecycle. The main purpose of the theme is to understand the nature of the evidence-base in which the prevailing evaluation system is embedded. Thus the following questions are analysed.

- Policy lifecycle consists of three phases; which are policy formulation, policy implementation and policy evaluation. During these phases how does your department generate evidence that supports or question its policies?
- What are the criteria for assessing credibility of data that is generated throughout the policy lifecycle?
- Do the elements of the criteria for assessing credibility of data, as identified above, require adherence to scientifically generated evidence, and if so, how?
- Would you say that the manner in which your department generates evidence has contributed to the quality of performance data in your department? Please substantiate your answer.

- What would you say is the frequency of the utilisation of scientifically generated evidence in your department throughout the policy lifecycle?
- If scientifically generated data is not available, what other common sources of evidence does your department rely on when taking policy decisions?
- Do you agree or disagree with the view that utilisation of the externally generated scientific evidence in government, to a large extent, depends on the nature of the relationship between researchers and policy practitioners in your department, rather than on the credibility of evidence? Please substantiate your answer.
- Do you have examples whereby political or personal considerations took precedence over scientific based evidence?
- Where policy research and evaluation are undertaken in your department, to what extent are the findings based on systematic evidence (systematic reviews as opposed to single case studies)?
- Does your department maintain an accessible repository of policy evaluation reports?

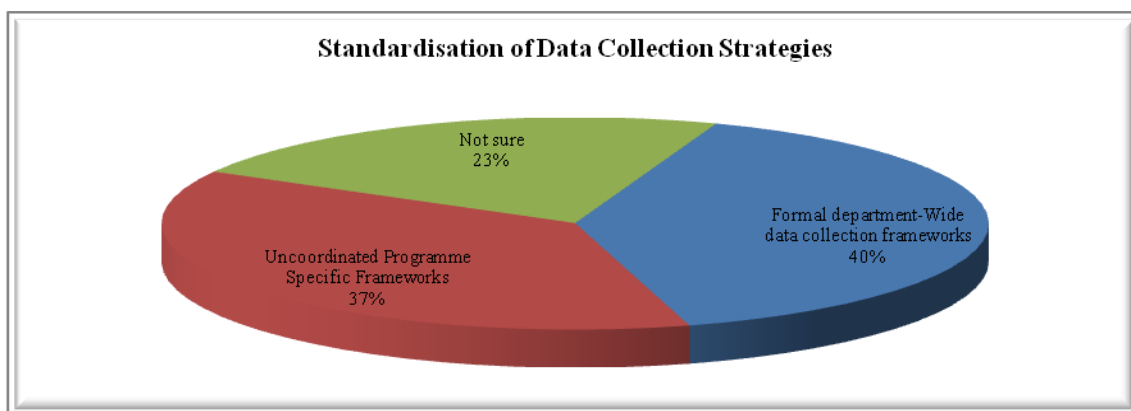
**Question Six: Policy lifecycle consists of three phases; which are policy formulation, policy implementation and policy evaluation. During these phases how does your department generate evidence that supports or refutes its policy position?**

The purpose of this question was to establish if departments have standardised formats for systematically generating evidence (data collection strategy) throughout the policy lifecycle. This is because literature reviewed has shown that data collection tools that are standardised have the potential to produce systematic performance information which, if evidence-based, would provide credible evidence for policy decision-making. Thus, Briceño, and Gaarder (2009:33) contend that setting up an M&E system requires the strengthening of data collection and processing systems in order to ensure high quality of data.

Based on the information provided by the interviewees, responses were then organised into 4 categories. They are: formal department-wide data collection frameworks, uncoordinated programme specific frameworks, not clear, and don't know. Findings of this study suggest that there is nominal success in institutionalising department-wide data collection frameworks in government given that only 40% of the interviewees indicated that their departments have formalised department-wide data collection frameworks which guide them as they generate evidence.

In the absence of department-wide frameworks for data collection, different components within the organisation settle for a plethora of uncoordinated sub-departmental data collection systems using different definitions and periodicity. The nominal success in the institutionalisation of department-wide frameworks was evident from the findings of 37% of the 40 interviewees, who indicated that their departments use un-coordinated programme specific tools, while 23% were not clear on the extent to which their departments' frameworks are applied across the department. This analysis is further illustrated in **Graph 6** below. Relevant quotes which are representative of the views of the participants are also provided in **Box 7** below as a form of evidence for the findings on this question.

**Graph 6: Standardisation of Data Collection Strategies**



**Box Seven: Quotes on the standardization of data collection strategies**

**The following responses signal that the departments have institutionalised formal department-wide data collection strategies**

- Throughout the process of formulation, the department employs a consultative approach with a minimum of two opportunities for stakeholders to provide input and feedback into all policies that are under development. An organisational readiness assessment that is undertaken after the policy has been developed (prior to full implementation process) assists in determining the fit and also to ensure that appropriate resources are allocated for the implementation. During the evaluation process, any implementation challenges would be assessed to determine whether the policy needs to be amended or strengthened.

**The following responses signal that the departments have no institutionalised formal department-wide data collection strategies, instead different components within the departments use programme specific frameworks**

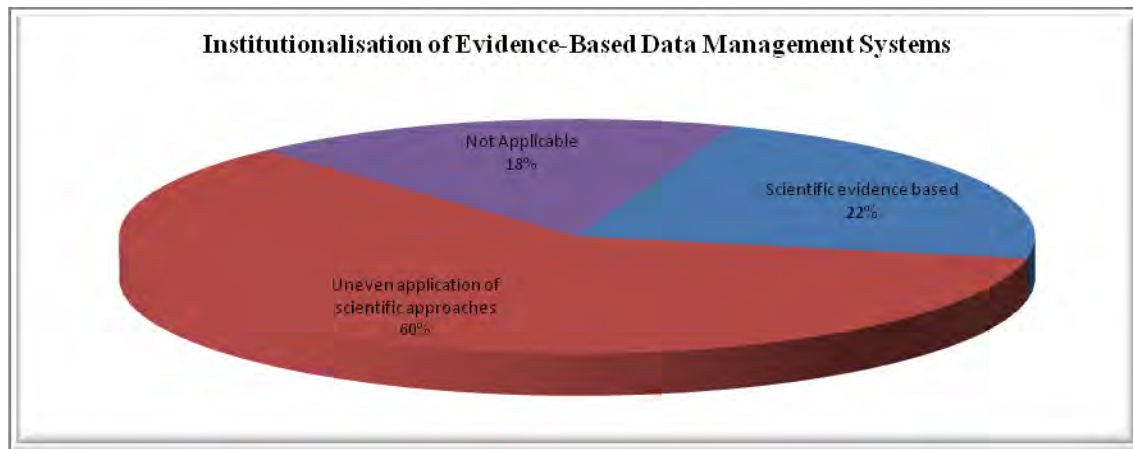
- There is no explicit mechanism set up in the department to generate evidence other than its incorporation through campaigns and projects.
- There is no formalised evidence-based strategy that applies to all programmes in the department. However, it is assumed that each section is committed to sound research methodologies when commissioning research, in compliance with procedural prescripts.

**Question Seven: This question is comprised of two questions that were asked to interviewees. They are: What are the criteria for assessing credibility of data that is generated throughout the policy lifecycle, and? Do the elements of the criteria require adherence to scientifically generated evidence, and if so, how?**

These questions have been combined since the central question that they seek to answer is whether the data management systems are evidence-based or not. Therefore the purpose of this question was to establish the extent to which the data collection and analysis frameworks adhere to scientific principles. Based on the information provided by the interviewees, responses were then organised into 4 categories. They are: Scientific evidence-based, uneven application of scientific approaches, not evidence based, and not applicable.

Findings of this study in this regard suggest that very few departments have managed to institute data collection, verification and analysis systems that are scientific based. For instance, only 22% of the 40 interviewees provided information that point to the institutionalisation of systematic evidence based data management systems. On the other hand, a considerable number of interviewees (60%) provided information that suggests uneven application of scientific principles in the data verifications systems of their departments. There is another group of interviewees who indicated that this question was not relevant to them, 18%, since they did not have formalised data management systems in place. This analysis is further illustrated in **Graph 7** below. Relevant quotes which are representative of the views of the participants are also provided in **Box 8** below as a form of evidence for the findings on this question.



**Graph 7: Institutionalisation of Data Management Systems****Box Eight: Quotes on the institutionalisation of evidence-based data management systems**

**The following responses signal that the departments have institutionalised scientific evidence-based data management systems**

- The department adheres to stringent scientific methods when collecting data; it uses specific research formula which is tested through vigorous scientific methods.
- The department has a statistical guideline that outlines the criteria for data management in order to ensure its credibility. Regular verification and validation of data is undertaken based on clearly defined norms and standards
- Our data credibility assessment framework requires that data has to be verifiable; the data source has to be reliable and consistent; the methodology for obtaining data has to be replicable and applicable in any setting and locality and the data has to be complete and accurate

**The following responses signal that the departments have not institutionalised scientific evidence-based data management systems, instead application of scientific evidence based principles is unevenly applied by different components within the departments**

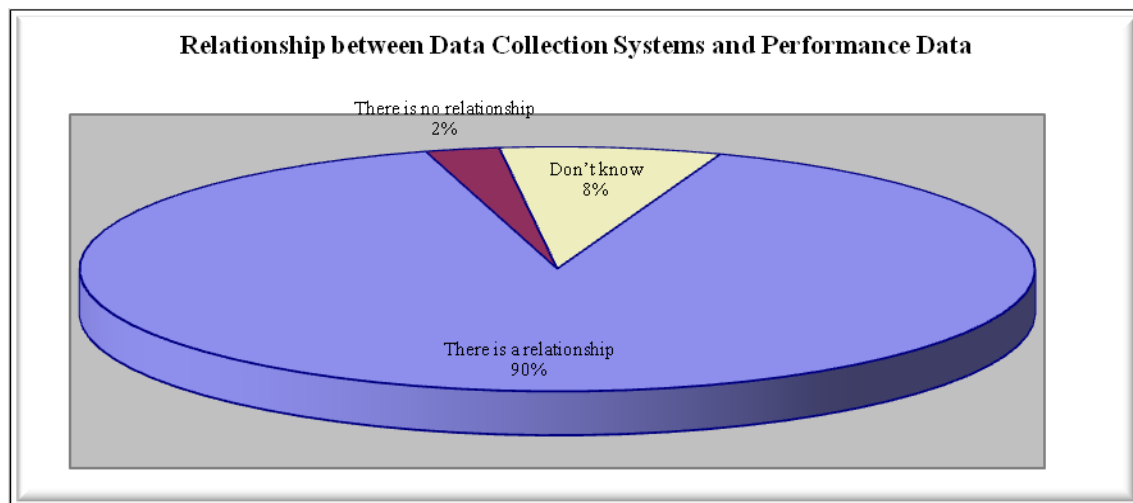
- Given the state of affairs in the department; that is, the fact that there are apparently no criteria, then adherence to scientifically generated evidence is also affected and therefore also problematic in this regard. The existing M&E framework has not been developed and refined to the stage where it really caters for evidence-based policy making and planning in the department. Policy practices are rather uneven in the

department; there might be —pocket of excellence”, though, but I am unsure of the general scientific quality of evidence in department.

- Except for stressing the importance of adhering to sound research methodologies, there are no criteria on how to assess the credibility of data. The challenge is that there is no ethical system or structure that is assigned a responsibility of monitoring if different divisions adhere to these criteria.

**Question Eight: Would you say that the manner in which your department generates evidence has contributed to the quality (good or poor) of performance data in your department?**

The purpose of this question was to establish if interviewees attributed the quality (whether poor or good) of performance information in their departments to the manner in which evidence was generated. In other words does it mean failure to institutionalise effective data collection systems lead to poor state of performance information? Based on the information provided by the interviewees, responses were then organised into 3 categorizes. They are: there is a relationship, there is no relationship, and don't know. The overwhelming majority, 90% of the 40 interviewees, concurred in saying that there is a relationship between the manner in which the data collection systems and the quality of performance information that is stored in departments. Only 8% of the interviews thought there is no relationship while 1 (2%) other person did not know if there is a relationship. This analysis is further illustrated in **Graph 8** below. Relevant quotes which are representative of the views of the participants are also provided in **Box 9** below as a form of evidence for the findings on this question.

**Graph 8: Data Collection Systems and Performance Data**

**Box Nine: Quotes on the relationship between data collection systems and quality of performance data in departments**

**The following responses signal that participants believe that there is a relationship between data collection systems and quality of performance data in their departments**

- Indeed- The verification processes starts from the level of the primary source of data, therefore improving the quality of generated data.
- Yes; all information that is gathered is verified. Research is also conducted to ensure that performance data is validated.
- Yes, feedback from end-users (trainees) is used to assist in planning and development of new products
- Because of reliance on other stakeholders to verify their data, this has greatly compromised the quality of our performance data. This is despite the fact that provinces and municipalities have to present their data to Municipal Councils, EXCOs or legislatures prior to submitting to the department. There is still a challenge with data quality and this might be due to lack of the required competencies at municipal level.
- Yes, the quality of data has improved significantly in the previous four years or so following the introduction of an institution-wide M&E system.

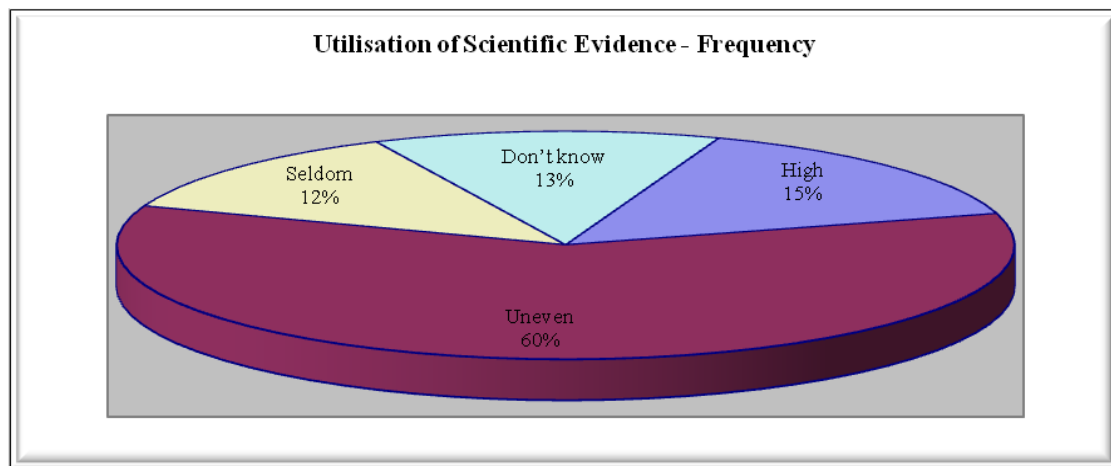
**The following responses signal that participants believe that there is no relationship between data collection systems and quality of performance data in their departments**

- Not really, because on many occasions officials within the department do not see the research reports as a true reflection and tend to be very defensive, rather than use them for improving performance and to inform planning decisions. Thus, despite the resilience of data collection systems in the department, performance information has not improved – especially utilisation of scientifically derived data.

**Question Nine: What would you say is the frequency of the utilisation of scientifically generated evidence in your department throughout the policy lifecycle?**

The purpose of this question was to determine the extent to which the departments utilise scientific evidence to inform policy direction. Based on the information provided by the interviewees, responses were then organised into 4 categories. They are: high, uneven, seldom, and don't know. The findings of this study is that utilisation of scientific evidence is very nominal in government given that 60% of the 40 interviewees indicated that scientific methods for gathering and appraising evidence are hardly utilised in their departments. It is also worth noting that while 13% of the interviewees did not know the frequency, the 12% other interviewees indicated that utilisation of scientific evidence in their departments was very seldom.

This study also found that utilisation of scientifically generated evidence is largely influenced by the sector within which a particular department or even a sub-departmental programme is operating. For instance, there is a heavy reliance and utilisation of scientifically generated evidence within the economic sector departments, which rely mostly on the Statssa for the "Official" data. The same cannot be said without a disclaimer about Social and Security sectors. This is because economic statisticians, and especially national accountants, have developed guidelines on how to measure the value added of each and every economic activity (Giovannini 2008:135). Thus, most of the 15% of the interviewees who reported that their departments always rely on scientifically generated evidence are from the economic sector. This analysis is further illustrated in **Graph 9** below. Relevant quotes which are representative of the views of the participants are also provided in **Box 10** below as a form of evidence for the findings on this question.

**Graph 9: Utilisation of Scientific Evidence****Box Nine: Quotes on the frequency of utilisation of Scientific Evidence**

**The following responses signal that the utilisation of scientific evidence is very high in departments**

- Fairly often, depending on the nature of the study that the department intends to undertake or is undertaking. Statistics South Africa's scientifically generated statistics is utilised as a base for reference in most of the studies.
- For internal policy making and planning purposes, evidence is also required on a continuous basis. Therefore, it could be stated that the frequency of utilisation of scientific evidence in the department is high.

**The following responses signal that the utilisation of scientific evidence is uneven in departments**

- The frequency is very high especially when it comes to developing policies. The same however, cannot be said about budget allocation decisions. There is poor research that motivate for the funding of some programmes. While government is very good at adding more programmes for funding, it is very poor at scrapping unproductive programmes. This is solely because the decision to fund programmes is not based on the strength of the programme that is being proposed. Thus, government has continued to fund programmes that add no value to citizens.
- For economic sector utilisation of scientifically generated evidence is mostly adhered to. We are however, struggling with this data in other sectors such as the social, governance and criminal justice.

**The following responses signal that scientific evidence is seldom utilised in departments**

- In many occasions officials within the department do not see research reports as a true reflection and tend to be very defensive, rather than use them for improving performance and to inform planning decisions.
- Seldom, because scientific studies are not regularly conducted within the department
- Very little; only in the cases of commissioned research on certain type of policy areas and collection of data in the case of grant funding, does the department attempt to generate evidence.
- Very limited. Decisions to allocate budgets are political and are not always subjected to scientific evidence. Allocations are based on political priorities thus the incentive for providing scientific evidence is minimal.

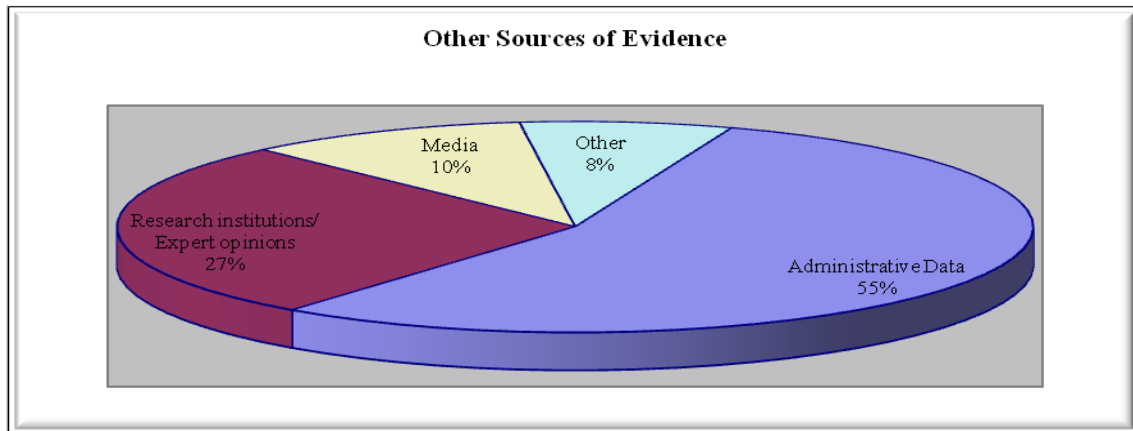
**Question 10: If scientifically generated data is not available, what other common sources of evidence does your department rely on when taking policy decisions?**

The purpose of this question was to explore other sources of evidence that the departments use; and if these sources have impacted in the quality of evidence base of the departments. Based on the information provided by the interviewees, responses were then organised into 4 categories. They are: administrative data, expert opinions from research institutions, media, and other. Findings of this study point to heavy reliance on administrative data; 55% of the 40 interviewees indicated that their departments rely on administrative data to augment their evidence base while only 27% pointed to the reliance on either research institutions or expert opinion, while 10% interviewees augmented their evidence base with media and the other 8% interviewees indicated that their departments used other sources such as National Treasury financial data and payroll system.

Almost all interviewees were not satisfied with the quality of administrative data in their departments. This is a direct result of having poor data management (collection, verification and analysis) systems in such government departments. This is particularly a problem in federalist systems (Curristine 2005:77). Thus, SA could not escape this problem since most of the administrative data is collected through provincial and municipal structures, whose poor capacity for generating credible data has been acknowledged by government. This analysis is further illustrated in **Graph 10** below. Relevant quotes which are representative of the views of the

participants are also provided in **Box 11** below as a form of evidence for the findings on this question.

**Graph 10: Other Sources of Evidence**



**Box Eleven: Quotes on other sources of evidence in departments**

**The following responses signal that, in the absence of scientific evidence, departments to a large extent augment their evidence based with administrative data**

- Performance information is drawn from national and provincial departments and municipalities through in-year monitoring and reporting mechanisms (monthly, quarterly, year-end and annual reports). Though measures have been put in place to improve the non-financial (performance) information, there are still irregularities in the datasets from government departments including municipalities. Consequently the data should be regarded as indicative of trends rather than absolute measures of performance.
- Administrative data from national and provincial offices on the number of products that have been delivered by the department; quality of this data is generally very weak

**The following responses signal that, in the absence of scientific evidence, departments to a large extent augment their evidence based with either expert opinions or research from research institutions**

- Statistics South Africa serves as a primary common source of evidence upon which the department rely on when taking decisions.
- The department taps from reputable academic and research sources, including local universities, the HSRC, HST, MRC, and other sources that produce evidence which relate to the mandate and functions of the DSD

**Question Eleven: Do you agree or disagree with the view that utilisation of the externally generated scientific evidence in government, to a large extent, depend on the nature of the relationship between researchers and policy practitioners in your department, rather than on the credibility of evidence? Please substantiate your answer?**

The purpose of this question was to ascertain government's objectivity when it comes to incorporating externally generated scientific evidence. Based on the information provided by the interviewees, responses were then organised into 4 categories. They are: credibility of evidence, producer of evidence, depends on the sensitivity of assignment, and don't know. Findings of this study suggest that decisions on whether to use externally generated scientific evidence are based on the credibility of evidence rather than on a relationship with the producer of evidence.

While the overwhelming percentage 67% of the 40 interviewees indicated that their department base their judgments on the credibility of evidence; only 3% indicated that the use of externally generated evidence was producer sensitive. The other 25% of the interviewees pointed out that the decision to use externally generated scientific evidence depended on the sensitivity of the assignment; such group cannot be ignored. This can assist in shading a light on why there is under-utilisation of scientific evidence in other departments. Though 67% of the interviewees indicated that credibility of data takes precedence when deciding whether to use evidence or not, there are serious reservations on the impartiality of due-diligence processes; the transparency of the process is not evident. The other 5% of the interviewees were unable to express their opinion on what influence the use of externally generated evidence in their departments.

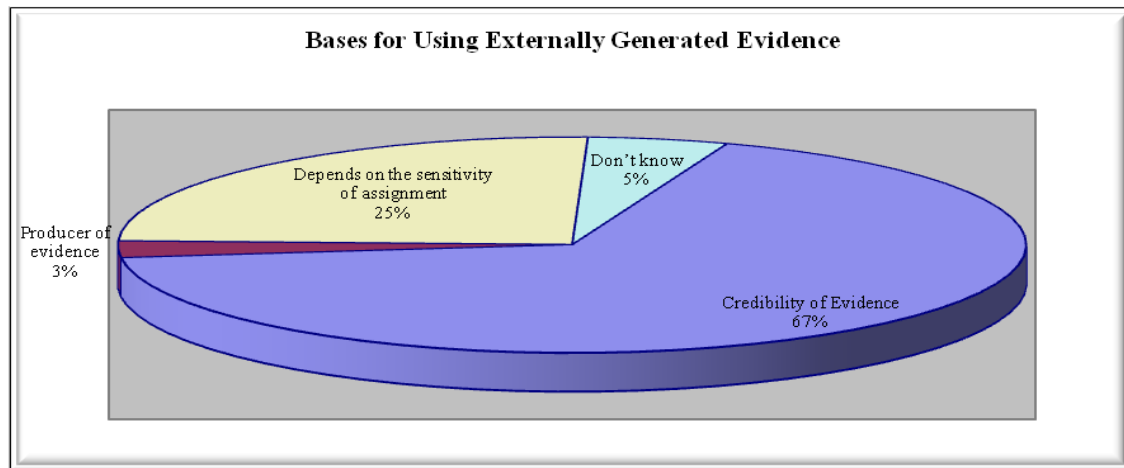
House (cited in Segone 2008:52) makes an interesting observation to this regard. He describes how evaluators who stand for a perspective that is critical of society will have greater difficulty winning government contracts. Instead, it is the evaluators who are willing to tow the party line who will be hired. Thus, in a sophisticated way, politically-correct evaluators are selected by a process of reverse discrimination whereby one does not blacklist people (which would risk a public debate) but instead "white lists" those one knows are favorable in terms of competence and appropriateness.

Evidence from the interviews suggests that not much success has been made in government towards the institutionalisation of independent structures for verifying quality of data provided for policy making. Until departments institutionalise independent structures, whether internal or outside of government, which will monitor the transparency of the decision making process,



credibility of the process remains unclear. This analysis is further illustrated in **Graph 11** below. Relevant quotes which are representative of the views of the participants are also provided in **Box 12** below as a form of evidence for the findings on this question.

**Graph 11: Bases for using externally generated evidence**



**Box Twelve: Quotes on the bases for using externally generated evidence**

**The following responses signal that utilisation of externally generated data is based on the credibility of evidence**

- We are a knowledge based organisation and we pride ourselves in adhering to ethical behavior which includes production of scientifically based evidence. Thus relationships with researchers play no role when we judge credibility of evidence.
- We depend on the credibility of data, but relationships and commitments between researchers and politicians (even senior officials) could affect the outcomes of processes, and the credibility of data and information produced for the department
- I do not agree. Most of the evidence used is based on studies conducted by people who are not known to political principals. Thus, credibility of evidence takes precedence over relationships.

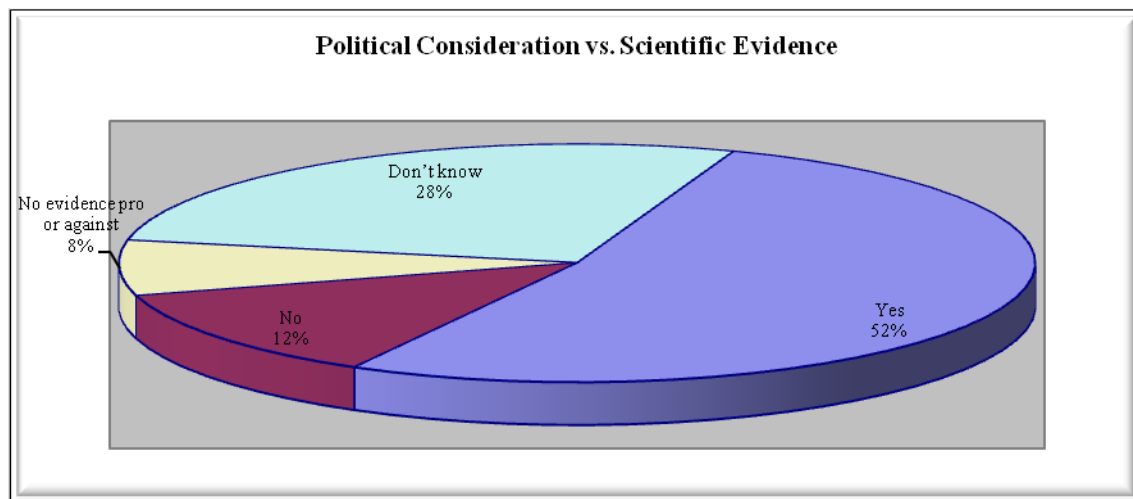
**The following responses signal that bases for the utilisation of externally generated evidence depends on the sensitivity of assignment**

- Our department is also considered to be a security department. Thus, we screen researchers that do work for the department. It is against that background that we prefer to work with certain researchers – trust and security concerns take precedence

**Question Thirteen: Are there any examples in your department whereby political consideration took precedence over scientific evidence when a policy of programme decision was taken?**

The purpose of this question was to assess the prevalence of cases whereby government officials observed political considerations overruling scientific-base evidence. For literature shows that under such circumstances it is difficult to institutionalise an evidence-based approach. Based on the information provided by the interviewees, responses were then organised into 4 categories. They are: there are examples (yes), no examples, no evidence pro or against the decision, and don't know. Findings of this study suggest that in most instances political consideration takes precedence over scientific evidence when policy and programme decisions are taken.

The overwhelming majority, 52%, of the 40 interviewees indicated that they have experienced overruling of scientific evidence due to political considerations. This has led to the implementation of politically motivated programmes. Such programmes are not based on empirical evidence and are hardly evaluated due to the nature of political sensitivity attached to them. This is because such policies or programmes are devoid of clear logic models or programme theories. The other 12% of the interviewees indicated that political consideration had no role while 8% indicated that there is no evidence of political interference when policy decisions were taken. A considerable number (28%) of the interviewees did not know whether or not political consideration took precedence over scientific evidence when their departments were making policy and programme decisions. This analysis is further illustrated in **Graph 12** below. Since most questions were either yes or no, no quotes are provided for this question.

**Graph 12: Political Consideration vs. Scientific Evidence**

**Question Fourteen: Where policy research and evaluation are undertaken in your department, to what extent are the findings based on systematic evidence (systematic reviews as opposed to single case studies)?**

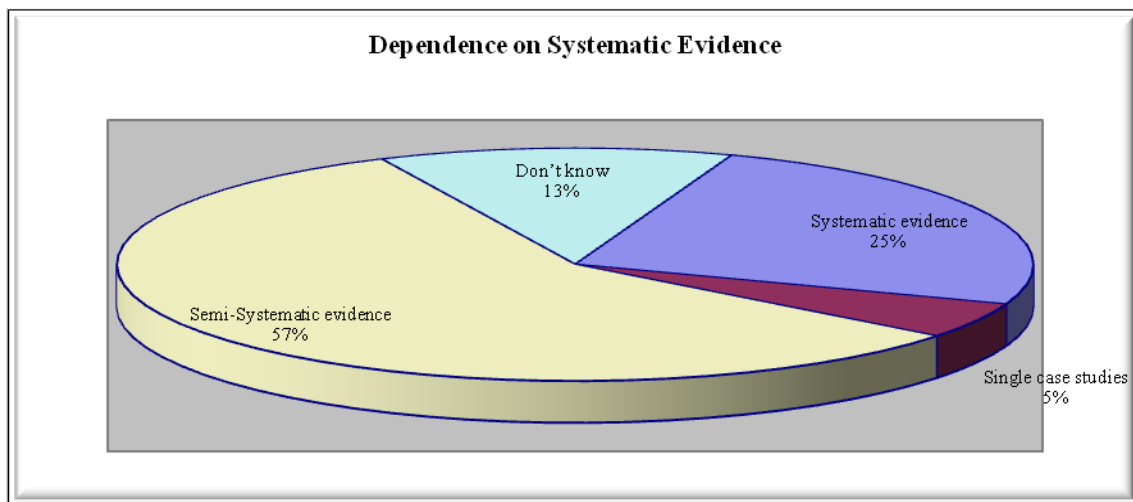
The purpose of this question was to assess the extent to which evaluation and research findings in departments are based on systematic evidence; that is, research based evidence. It was explained to the interviewees that, for the purpose of this study, systematic evidence would refer to the systematic aggregation of data from many individual studies. The related question sought to ascertain whether departments were basing their findings on systematic reviews or single case studies. The objective of systematic reviews is to present a balanced and impartial summary of the existing research, enabling decisions on effectiveness to be based on all relevant studies of adequate quality. Such an approach is termed a meta-analysis. Meta-analyses offer a systematic and quantitative approach to synthesizing evidence to answer important questions. Nonetheless, pitfalls abound in the execution of meta-analyses and they are fundamentally limited by the quality of the underlying studies (the so-called GIGO principle of ‘garbage in, garbage out’), Crombie and Davies 2009:7.

Based on the information provided by the interviewees, responses were then organised into 4 categories. They are: evaluation findings are based on systematic evidence, evaluation findings are based on single case studies, and evaluation findings are based on semi-systematic evidence, and don't know. Information provided by 24% of the 40 interviewees suggest that their departments base evaluation findings on systematic reviews, while only 5% of the interviewees

provided information which suggest that their departments base their evaluation findings on single case studies. The other 13% of the interviewees had no view on the extent policy research findings were based on systematic evidence.

A substantial number of responses from the interviewees (57%) are located under semi-systematic evidence. This is largely because information provided, though pointing to the utilisation of sound research methodologies, it was however, not possible to ascertain adherence to these sound principles. This is largely because interviewees in this category indicated that their departments had research and knowledge management capacity problems and had also not established research or ethical committees who assess adherence to sound methodologies. This leads to a chicken-and-egg problem: data are poor partly because they aren't being used; or they're not used partly because their quality is poor. Literature reviewed concurs with this observation; for instance, much research and evaluation is flawed by unclear objectives; poor design; methodological weaknesses; inadequate statistical reporting and analysis; selective use of data; and, conclusions which are not supported by the data provided (Davies 2003:27). This analysis is further illustrated in **Graph 13** below. Since most questions were either yes or no, no quotes are provided for this question.

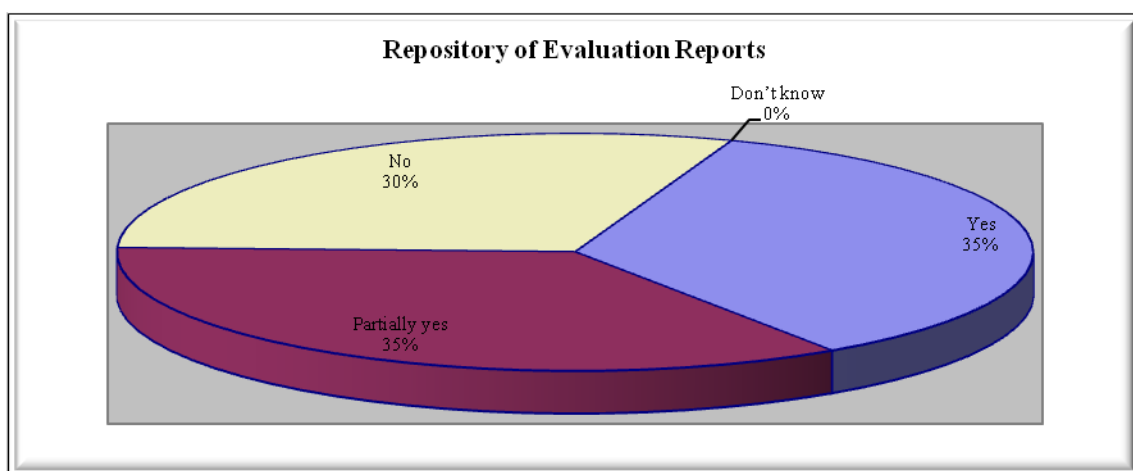
**Graph 13: Dependence on Systematic Evidence**



**Question Fifteen: Does your department maintain accessible repository of policy evaluation reports? Please substantiate your answer.**

The purpose of this question was to establish if the departments have institutionalised knowledge management systems; which facilitate accessibility of evaluation findings within the departments. Based on the information provided by the interviewees, responses were then organised into 4 categories. They are: yes, partially yes, no, and don't know. Findings show that only 35% of the 40 interviewees provided information which suggest that their departments have functional knowledge management systems that enable the whole of the department to access evaluation and research products. While on the other hand, 35% of the interviewees provided information which indicate that knowledge management systems are not departmental-wide; and not all evaluation and research products are made available through the sub-department knowledge management system. Interviewees in this category also indicated that their departments do not have policies that regulate knowledge management. Also worth noting is the fact that 30% of the interviewees indicated that their departments do not have knowledge management systems as well as research capacity in place. The worrying observation is that almost all interviewees in this category mentioned that institutional memory was not safeguarded as most of the critical reports were in the hands of the few. This analysis is further illustrated in **Graph 14** below. Relevant quotes which are representative of the views of the participants are also provided in **Box 13** below as a form of evidence for the findings on this question.

**Graph 14: Repository of Evaluation Reports**



<b>Box Thirteen: Quotes on whether departments have functional accessible repositories</b>
<p><b>The following responses signal that departments have functional accessible repositories</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes. There is a knowledge management policy and directorate that facilitate central repository of policy and programme reports in the department.</li> <li>• Yes. The internet and Intranet are the media of communication through which our department makes its reports available to public and government officials.</li> </ul>
<p><b>The following responses signal that departments have partially functioning accessible repositories</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes, there are repositories for programme/project evaluation and policy evaluation reports, particularly for the donor funded programmes</li> <li>• Although not in a centralized manner, every policy owner is expected to have evaluation reports that are accessible to all when needed.</li> <li>• Uneven, though the website repository has improved there is plenty of important reports that are still kept with individuals. There is no knowledge management system that enforces adherence to a particular standard.</li> <li>• Yes, though at a minimal level. Not much policy evaluation has been conducted by the department.</li> </ul>
<p><b>The following responses signal that departments do not have accessible repositories</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No, since not much policy evaluation has been done by the department.</li> <li>• The department has a rather weak information and knowledge management capacity, which in turn has weakened the department's capacity to produce scientific evidence for policy-making and planning, as well as reporting purposes</li> </ul>

#### **4.3.2.1 Summary of key findings for theme two**

The focus of the second theme was to assess the nature of the evidence system in which the prevailing evaluation system in government is embedded. One major question that arises from the findings of this study with particular reference to the second theme, is whether the prevailing evidence-based system is technically sound or not. The system would be technically sound if it generated reliable, verifiable and objective evidence to support decision making, including policy decisions.

Findings of this study on the nature of the evidence system in which the prevailing evaluation system in government is embedded could be summarized as follows:

- There is nominal success in institutionalising department-wide data collection frameworks in government given that only 40% of the interviewees indicated that their departments have formalised department-wide data collection frameworks which guide them as they generate evidence.
- Very few departments have managed to institute data collection, verification and analysis systems that are scientific based. For instance, only 22% of the interviewees provided information that point to the institutionalisation of systematic evidence based data management systems.
- Utilisation of scientific evidence in sampled departments is very nominal given that 60% of the interviewees indicated that scientific methods for gathering and appraising evidence were hardly utilised in their departments.
- Utilisation of scientifically generated evidence is largely influenced by the sector within which a particular department is operating. For instance, there is a heavy reliance and utilisation of scientifically generated evidence within the economic sector departments, which rely mostly on the Statssa for the "Official" data.
- There is a heavy reliance on administrative data; thus, 55% of the interviewees indicated that their departments rely on administrative data to augment their evidence base.
- Decisions on whether to use externally generated scientific evidence are based on the credibility of evidence rather than on a relationship with the producer of evidence; 67% of the interviewees indicated that they based their judgments on the credibility of evidence. Though 67% of the interviewees indicated that credibility of data takes precedence when deciding whether to use evidence or not, there are serious reservations on the impartiality of due-diligence processes; the transparency of the process is not evident.
- In most instances political consideration takes precedence over scientific evidence when policy and programme decisions are taken by departments. Thus, the overwhelming majority of interviewees, 52%, indicated that they have experienced overruling of scientific evidence due to political considerations.
- Sampled departments have research and knowledge management capacity problems; thus, only 35% of the interviewees provided information which suggests that their departments have functional knowledge management systems that enabled the whole of the department to access evaluation and research products.

- Evidence from the interviews suggests that not much success has been made in government towards the institutionalisation of independent (research or ethical committees) structures for verifying quality of data provided for policy decisions.

### 4.3.3 The Prevailing Accountability Framework

Reviewed literature suggests that strengthening of M&E systems is not only, even principally, a supply-side issue requiring a “technical fix.” For an M&E system to be successful and sustainable, the information and findings of M&E have to be utilised intensively by all stakeholders, including sector ministries. Supplying information should be the response to a need, not an end in itself (Mackay 2007:57). Building an M&E system is not just a set of technical procedures; however, there are a number of other factors which must also be studied in building the foundation of a sustainable monitoring and evaluation system (Kusek and Rist 2008:110). To this end, the focus of this theme is on the extent to which the prevailing accountability framework sustains the utilisation of scientifically generated evidence. Thus, this theme casts some light on the third research objective, which seeks to assess the impact of the existing accountability mechanisms on the utilisation of scientifically generated evidence in government. The following questions are analysed under this theme:

- Where policy evaluation has been conducted, are the findings made public?
- Do the annual reports or any performance related reports of your department provide a fair and balanced account of the evaluation findings? Please substantiate your answer.
- Would you say evidence emanating from policy evaluations are considered and reflected in your department’s strategic and budget plans? Please substantiate your answer.
- Are there any policy changes that you can attribute to research and evaluation findings in your department?
- Are there any incentives for conducting evaluations (policy or programme) in your department? Please substantiate your answer.
- In outlining the functions of Parliament the Constitution states that the National Assembly must provide for mechanisms to ensure that all Executive organs of state in the national sphere of government are accountable to it, and further that the National Assembly must maintain oversight of the exercise of national Executive authority, including the implementation of legislation, and any organ of state. Given that Parliament has such a considerable responsibility, to what extent has Parliament been able to hold your department accountable for the performance of its policies?

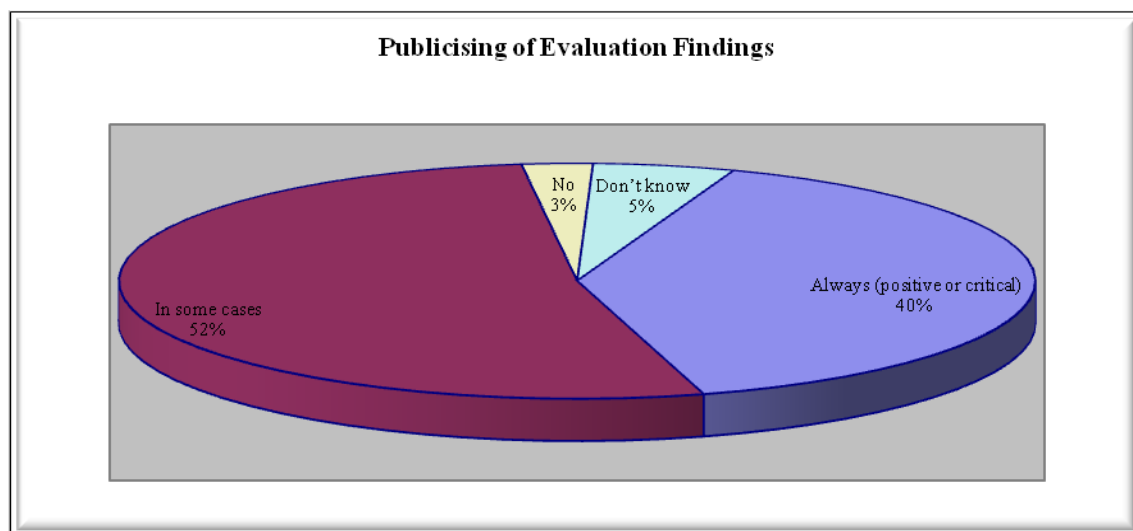


- In your view, does the South Africa's current electoral system encourages or discourages Members of Parliament to be accountable to their party rather than the electorate? Please substantiate your answer.

**Question Sixteen: Where policy evaluation has been conducted, are the findings made public?**

The purpose of this question was to establish the extent to which government departments publicize evaluation findings whether negative or positive. The question is informed by the reviewed literature which suggests that monitoring and evaluation enhances transparency and supports accountability relationships by revealing the extent to which government has attained its desired objectives (Mackay 2008:89). Thus the extent to which a department publicizes its research or evaluation findings indicates its willingness to be held accountable for its performance.

Based on the information provided by the interviewees, responses were then organised into 4 categories. They are: information is always (positive or critical) made public, information made public only if it is positive about the department (in some case), evaluation findings are never made public, and don't know. This study found that the transparency of the sampled departments is compromised due to the reluctance of departments in making evaluation findings public; whether positive or. For instance, only 40% of the 40 interviewees provided information which suggest that their departments are always (positive or critical) share evaluation findings. A worrying factor is that 52% of the interviewees said findings were made public only if they were positive about the performance of the department. The worst case scenario is where the departments went as far as falsifying or doctoring the findings. This does not auger very well for accountability. Only 1, 3%, interviewee indicated that her department has not done policy evaluations hence no publication of findings could be reported. The other 5% of the interviewees were did not know if their departments publicize their policy findings or not. This analysis is further illustrated in **Graph 15** below. Relevant quotes which are representative of the views of the participants are also provided in **Box 14** below as a form of evidence for the findings on this question.

**Graph 15: Publicising of Evaluation findings**

**Box Fourteen: Quotes on the Departments' tendency towards publication of evaluation findings**

**The following responses signal that departments always publish evaluation findings**

- Yes. Finding of the policy evaluation are in the public domain
- Yes, findings are documented and published on the departmental website, printed and distributed to sector partners and civil society; presented at municipal platforms and water sector events and forums

**The following responses signal that departments only publish evaluation findings if they are positive about their performance**

- Not always and also no large scale evaluation but ad hoc research commissioned by the department. The quality of which is normally not good enough to guide policy decisions. Thus some questionable policy decisions have been taken by the department
- Policy evaluation findings are not always made public but the department makes quite a substantial amount of performance information available to public.
- Very few evaluations have been conducted. However, if the findings of the evaluation are critical of the performance of the department, chances are that such findings do not live to see the light of the day. They are either shelved or doctored

**Question Seventeen: Do the annual reports or any performance related reports of your department provide a fair and balanced account of the evaluation findings? Please substantiate your answer.**

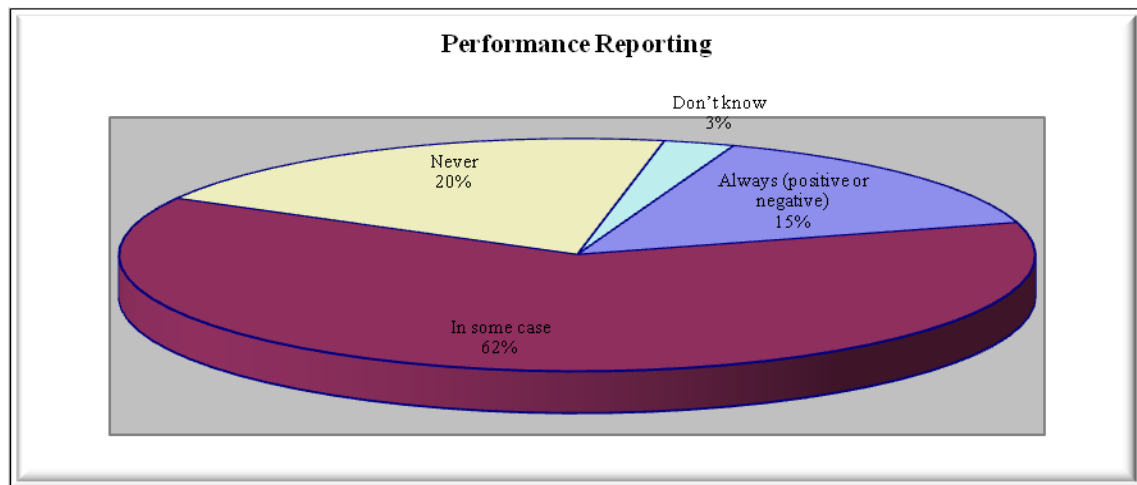
The purpose of this question was to determine the extent to which evaluation findings (positive or critical) are incorporated to performance reports. Public performance reports are key components in the process through which government accounts to the public for its policies and programmes. When done well, performance reports inform citizens of what government intends to do on their behalf, and subsequently whether or to what extent it has succeeded.

The enforcement of accountability in the S.A. government institutions is through the tabling of annual reports to Parliament by the executive authorities. Such reports must contain performance information (non-financial) which reflects what was achieved against set targets as contained in the Strategic Plan. Treasury Regulations such as the PFMA and DORA regulate quarterly reporting in government in that they require the Accounting Officer of an institution to establish procedures for quarterly reporting to the executive authority to facilitate effective performance monitoring, evaluation and corrective action. There are other ad hoc performance reports such as the mid-term programme and policy reviews and five-year policy reviews, which are not mandatory, that the departments produce from time to time.

Based on the information provided by the interviewees, responses were then organised into 4 categories. They are: evaluation findings are always (positive or critical) incorporated to performance reports, evaluation findings are sometimes incorporated to performance reports, evaluation findings are never incorporated to performance reports, and don't know. Findings of this study paint a very gloomy picture with regard to incorporation of evaluation findings to performance reports. For instance, only 15% of the 40 interviewees indicated that evaluation findings are incorporated to performance reports even if they are critical of the department. The considerable number of interviewees (62%) indicated that evaluation findings are hardly incorporated to annual and quarterly reports because either evaluations are not done frequently or the formats of these reports do not allow for this kind of information to be included. While 20% of the interviewees indicated that policy evaluation findings never get incorporated to performance reports, 1 (3%) interviewee did not know whether or not evaluation findings get incorporated to performance reports. This analysis is further illustrated in **Graph 16** below.

Relevant quotes which are representative of the views of the participants are also provided in **Box 15** below as a form of evidence for the findings on this question.

**Graph 16: Performance Reporting**



**Box Fifteen: Quotes on the extent to which departments incorporate evaluation findings to their performance reports**

**The following responses signal that departments always incorporate evaluation findings on their performance reports**

- Yes, whether information gathered reflects bad performance by the department, this is reflected as such in order for transparency to be achieved at all levels.
- Yes. The template used for performance reports makes it mandatory to give a comprehensive account on performance
- Yes; our research findings on whether government is complying with the 9 Constitutional principles are presented to parliament – without any falsification of findings.

**The following responses signal that departments don't always incorporate evaluation findings on their performance reports**

- To some extent it does. The challenge is the nature of information contained in those reports; in many cases the information is output related and may be limited with regard to outcome and impact

- No, Annual reports have specific format and they require performance information on what each department has performed on its programme for a particular financial year.
- Not always. In most cases it will only be those findings that give accolades for the Department. I think this is so because we do not want to hang our dirty linen out in the public eye.
- No, as very few evaluation studies have been conducted in the department; our reports mostly provide monitoring data and not necessarily evaluation findings.
- No, in my opinion I think that inputs into the annual and quarterly performance reports are based largely on desk-top progress reports and not so much on evaluation and policy evaluation findings. I think policy evaluation is sporadic and does not necessarily always reflect in the performance reports.
- Not really. Annual reports are largely accounts of achievements for a certain financial year, and do not contain extensive evidence or details of policy evaluation findings as such. In fact, the scope and nature of annual reports do not cater for detailed information on policy evaluation findings. Therefore, policy evaluation findings are usually contained in separate reports or publications which are produced by Programmes mandated to drive policy implementation in a certain area of work.

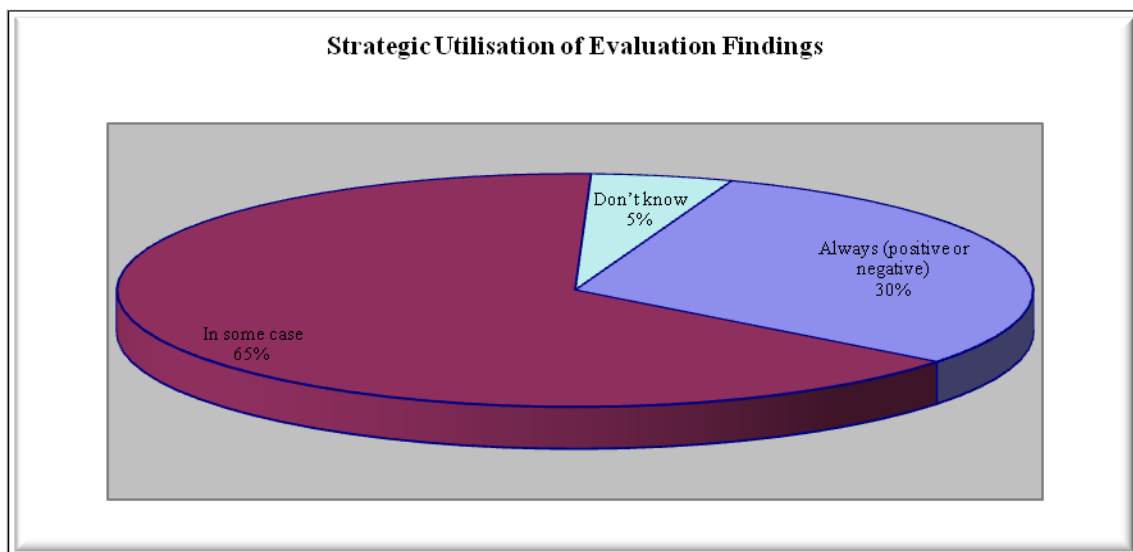
**Question Eighteen: This question is comprised of two questions that were asked to interviewees. They are: Would you say evidence emanating from policy evaluations are considered and reflected in your department's strategic and budget plans? Please substantiate your answer, and? Are there any policy changes that you can attribute to research and evaluation findings in your department? These questions have been combined since the central question that they seek to answer is the extent to which evaluation findings inform strategic direction of the department.**

Timely and reliable performance information should culminate at influencing the strategic direction of the organisation. In government, this translates to the utilisation of performance information during strategic (5 year government Medium Term Strategic Framework and departmental strategic plans), budgeting (Medium-Term Expenditure Framework and departmental budget votes or allocation) and operational processes (departmental Annual Performance Plans). The purpose of this question was to assess the extent to which evidence

(performance information) generated through evaluations informs strategic direction of the departments.

Based on the information provided by the interviewees, responses were then organised into 4 categories. They are: evaluation findings always (positive or critical) inform strategic direction, evaluation findings in some cases inform strategic direction, evaluation findings do not inform strategic direction, and don't know. This study has found that most strategic and budget decisions are not based on systematic evidence (objectively verified performance information). For instance, only 30% of the 40 interviewees indicated that evaluation findings are fairly considered, without prejudice to findings that are critical of the department, during strategic and budgetary decision-making engagements. This reflects badly on government, more especially, since 65% of the interviewees indicated that their departments are critical of the findings that are contrary to their expectations. Other interviewees in this category went as far as arguing that the low levels of utilisation of performance information, is related to the lack of incentives within the system. The other 5% of the interviewees do not know if evaluation findings are or not unconditionally incorporated to their departments' strategic plans and budgets. This analysis is further illustrated in **Graph 17** below. Relevant quotes which are representative of the views of the participants are also provided in **Box 16** below as a form of evidence for the findings on this question.

**Graph 17: Strategic Utilisation of Evaluation Findings**



<b>Box Sixteen: Quotes on the strategic utilisation of evaluation findings</b>
<p><b>The following responses signal that evaluation findings always inform departments' strategic direction</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes; for instance, Occupation Specific Dispensation –a huge of number of scarce skills were being seen leaving the public service year after year to work in the private or overseas as a result of better remuneration package. In order to retain existing scarce skills as well as to attract new talent into the public service, OSD was introduced.</li> <li>• Evidence emanating from policy evaluations is considered and reflected in the department's strategic plan and budget; such evidence is used for both planning and resource mobilization purposes.</li> <li>• Yes, in the case of the ten-year review on the implementation of the Population Policy, specifically, the findings of the policy implementation review were used as a basis for designing a five-year strategy on population and development for the next five years</li> </ul>
<p><b>The following responses signal that evaluation findings do not always inform departments' strategic direction</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes, in some cases.</li> <li>• To some extent they are, even though the linkage may not necessarily be visible.</li> <li>• Sometimes; depending on the quality of research output</li> <li>• Not quite. As I mentioned earlier on when it comes to setting government priorities, political imperatives prevail. Policy reviews have not made much impact</li> <li>• Not always. There is a disjuncture between the policy evaluation, strategic and budgeting planning processes. These processes need to be aligned.</li> </ul>

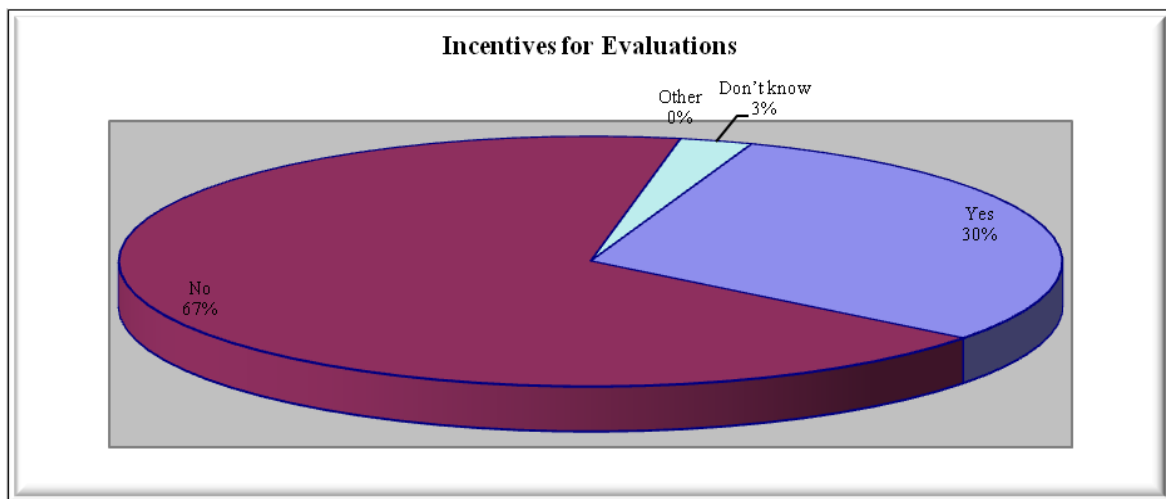
**Question 19: Are there any incentives for conducting evaluations (policy or programme) in your department? Please substantiate your answer.**

This question was initially excluded from the list of questions that were asked during the interviews. However, it became clear during interviews that issues related to incentives were raised by the interviewees. In order to give all interviewees equal chance to respond to the question, an email was circulated to all the participants. The purpose of the question was to ascertain if there are any incentives for conducting evaluations in government. Based on the information provided by the interviewees, responses were then organised into 4 categorizes. They

are: there are incentives for doing evaluations (Yes), there are no incentives for doing evaluations (No), other, and don't know.

Findings of this study suggest that incentives for evaluations are very weak in government. For instance, 30% of the 40 interviewees indicated that there are incentives for evaluations in their departments. A considerable number of interviewees (67%) indicated that incentives for evaluations are very weak in their departments. There is only 1 (3%) interviewee who did not know whether or not his department has any incentives for conducting evaluations. This analysis is further illustrated in **Graph 18** below. Relevant quotes which are representative of the views of the participants are also provided in **Box 17** below as a form of evidence for the findings on this question.

**Graph 18: Incentives for Evaluations**



**Box Seventeen: Quotes on whether departments have institutionalised incentives for evaluations**

**The following responses signal that departments have institutionalised incentives for evaluations**

- The incentive will be to have relevant information that is important for future planning and funding decisions. The information gathered during evaluations informs further implementation or review of the policy or programme



- Yes. Confirmation of the correctness of the policy position where positive outcomes emerge as well as knowledge for future programme/project improvement. In some cases tangible awards and financial incentives are provided for best performers such as in the case of the EPWP.

**The following responses signal that departments have not institutionalised incentives for evaluations**

- Evaluations aimed at assessing value for money are scarce in government – there is no incentive for carrying such evaluations. If the process of budget allocation was evidence based, it would require that programmes indicators that measure economy, efficiency, effectiveness and equity be examined during the Medium Term Expenditure Committee Meeting – this is the meeting whereby departments make presentations on their programmes – bidding process for extra budget allocations.
- No, thus there is neither policy for evaluations nor a dedicated unit within the department to do evaluations. A proposal was submitted to a DDG to set up a programme evaluation unit about 2 yrs ago but it was shelved.
- Not really. To some degree, I guess performance assessments, and the accompanying bonuses are the only incentives.

**Question 20: To what extent has the parliament been able to hold departments accountable for the performance of their policies?**

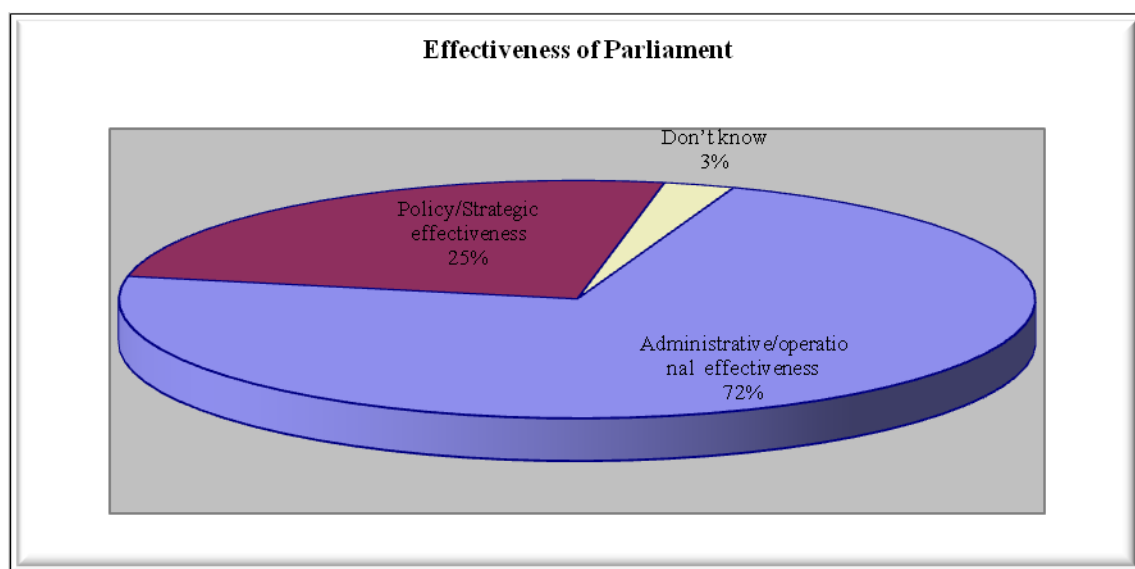
The intention of this question was to establish the extent to which the SA parliament has succeeded in holding departments (Cabinet) accountable on the performance of their policies. This is critical since section 92 of the Constitution of SA, stipulates that Members of the Cabinet are accountable collectively and individually to Parliament for the exercise of their powers and the performance of their functions. It further states that Members of the Cabinet must act in accordance with the Constitution; and provide Parliament with full and regular reports concerning matters under their control. Instruments at the disposal of Parliament for holding departments accountable include: Strategic Plans and Annual Performance Plans of departments, Budget allocations of departments as presented by National Treasury, Annual reports of departments, audit report as prepared by the AGSA and parliamentary questions.

Based on the information provided by the interviewees, responses were then organised into 3 categorizes. They are: administrative/operational effectiveness, policy/strategic effectiveness, and

don't know. Findings of this study suggest that parliament's success, to a large extent, is limited to compliance issues. Thus 72% of the 40 interviewees provided information that suggests that parliament has been very successful in holding departments accountable with regard to administrative issues. This includes things such as the missing of deadlines and composition and seniority of departmental teams that report to portfolio committees. However, when it comes to content and strategic issues, Parliament has been found wanting; thus, only 25% of the interviewees indicated that Parliament has succeeded in holding departments accountable on the performance of their policies. Only 1 (3%) interviewee could not express a view on the effectiveness of parliament in holding departments accountable.

Most of the interviewees attributed this weakness to the research and strategic capacity of parliament. Thus, portfolio committees were unable to challenge departments on their strategic directions. The other sore point is related to financial accountability. This is the area where most interviewees felt Parliament's authority was weak. Despite good effort by Scopa to question departments' poor financial performance (qualified audit), there has been no consequences to the defaulting departments. Thus, Scopa has been relegated to a powerless watchdog. This analysis is further illustrated in **Graph 19** below. Relevant quotes which are representative of the views of the participants are also provided in **Box 18** below as a form of evidence for the findings on this question.

**Graph 19: Effectiveness of Parliament**



**Box Eighteen: Quotes on the extent to which Parliament is able to hold government accountable on the performance of its policies**

**The following responses signal that parliament's effectiveness is only limited to ensuring administrative accountability**

- My view is that the South African Parliament is very weak and I think this is caused by various factors such as: 1) Chairs of portfolio committees and members of parliament are often very junior to hold the Executive accountable; 2) Members of parliament are often very clueless on issues that they need to exercise oversight, 3) Close to two-thirds majority enjoyed by the ruling party in parliament does not make accountability easier.
- SCOPA is the only parliamentary committee that is able to hold the Executive accountable for its policies and this is because it is chaired by the MP of the opposition. Lastly, most Ministers do not often see the need to attend parliamentary committees, instead they send officials.
- There is very little if any oversight in terms of the implementation of the Policy. The Portfolio Committee is supposed to perform this oversight, for all the department's policies and major programmes. Parliament is not very "visible" in terms of its oversight function in relation to the department's policies. This is why I dare to say that Parliament does not perform this oversight function well.

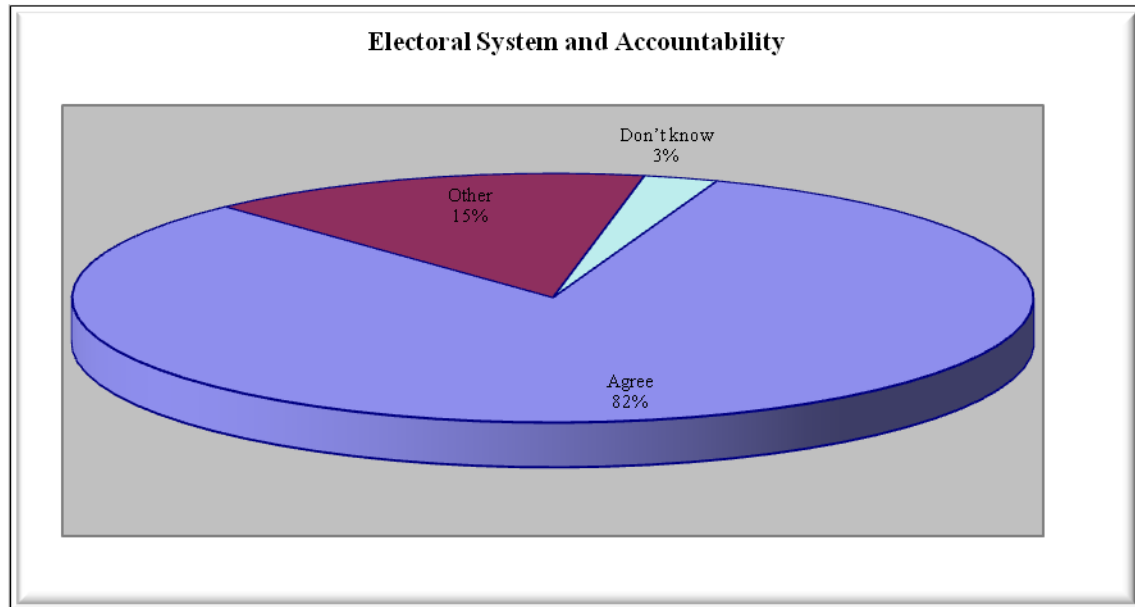
**The following responses signal that parliament is effective in holding government accountable on the performance of its policies**

- The department submits an annual report and other ad hoc reports to parliament. The department moreover has now and then been called to brief Portfolio committees relevant to its mandate to report on matters of concern to them. Written and oral questions have been sent to the department and, in that way, accountability is entrenched in the performance of the department.
- Parliament has taken a keen interest on the programme and thus pays attention to the performance of the programme. The department makes periodical presentations to parliament on the performance of the programme, and also responds to most of the parliamentary questions which seek to establish progress made towards achieving programme objectives.

**Question Twenty One: In your view, does the South Africa's current electoral system encourages or discourages Members of Parliament to be accountable to their party rather than the electorate? Please substantiate your answer.**

The purpose of this question was to gauge participants' views on the impact of the S.A's party-list electoral system on parliament's independence from party political pressures. Literature shows that where political parties have undue pressure on their parliamentary representatives; electorates suffer since the independence of such parliamentarians in judgment is compromised by the need to satisfy their political masters before anything else. Thus, under such condition objectivity of parliamentarians is questionable, especially when required to publicly challenge their comrades in government on the achievements of their policies (Andersson and Gordillo 2004:309). To this end, Briceño, and Gaarder (2009:28) contend that common sense also says that an oversight body should enjoy a high degree of independence to be able to freely make assessments and fully disclose them, without any improper influence.

Based on the information provided by the interviewees, responses were then organised into 4 categories. They are: agree, disagree, other, and don't know. This study found that the overwhelming percentage, 82%, of the 40 interviewees believe that the current electoral system compromises the independence of parliamentarians. Thus, confirming findings of the Independent Panel Assessment of Parliament (2007:8) which found that the party-list system tends to promote accountability of Members of Parliament to their political parties rather than to the electorate. The power of political parties to remove their members from Parliament also tends to discourage the expression of individual viewpoints as opposed to party political views. At least 15% of the interviewees could not blame the party-system for the perceived ineffectiveness of Parliament in holding government accountability. They blame this situation on things like weak and politicised civil society, illiteracy, historical and racial composition of the electorates. Only 1 (3%) could not express a view on the impact of the current electoral system on parliamentarians. This analysis is further illustrated in **Graph 20** below. Relevant quotes which are representative of the views of the participants are also provided in **Box 20** below as a form of evidence for the findings on this question.

**Graph 20: Impact of the Electoral system on Accountability**

**Box Nineteen: Quotes on the extent to which the party-electoral system impact on the Parliament's ability to hold government**

**The following responses signal that the party-electoral system has negative impact on the Parliament's ability to hold government**

- Yes I agree. For instance all public representatives are allocated to Study Groups and each Study Group is headed by a Study Group Chairperson and is politically managed by a Whip. The core function of the Study Group is to do political work on the legislative programme before the Committee, political oversight in respect to matters coming before it, and formulate policy for the relevant focus area. In doing this work the Study Group ensures that policies of its political party find practical expression. Thus if a member of parliament aligned to the party dares to differ with the position of the committee, he is viewed as having differed with the ruling party. The consequence for such an act, whether justifiable to the electorate or not, will lead to the removal of such a member. However, a strong reliance on evidence-based advice and strong stakeholder (labour and business) consultation culture in the department has often led to balancing of political interest with social and economic impact. For instance, though the ruling party was against the Interactive Gambling Act, it was passed by parliament due to the presence of strong stakeholder involvement. So though, the current electoral system

encourages party loyalty, strong stakeholder involvement is a critical arbiter for political influence.

- It is a disaster – the party lines are too strong. This compromises the accountability in the governance system big time. As explained before, some programmes that are being funded by government are politically motivated and have been approved by parliament despite obvious defects.
- Yes I agree; loyalty and commitment to the political party in most cases undermines administrative accountability and oversight. Political figure heads seem to know that if MPs differ with their party heads and management, they may be replaced by those who are willing to tow the party line. This presents a significant challenge to the functioning of the accountability and evidence-based frameworks, which also means that unsound policies can be passed by Parliament just to appease political allies.

**The following responses signal that the party-electoral system does not have negative impact on the Parliament's ability to hold government**

- Under normal circumstances, proportional representation system should be encouraged given the fact that it allows the minorities to be represented in parliament. However, in South Africa, voters have not matured to a point that they hold the ruling party accountable. Most people are still voting along racial and historical lines. Otherwise, other things being equal, parliamentarians can be held accountable by voters through the casting of a ballot. A party that does not deliver will be voted out. Thus a party is a mechanism through which electorates should hold MPs accountable to them.
- For me, the problem is not with the electoral system but the literate levels or political awareness of the electorates. Civil society is critical in capacitating electorates so that they better interact with politicians. Well educated communities are able to hold politicians accountable through the ballot study. Politicians bank in the ignorance of the electorates. So for me, the loophole in the accountability framework is in the literacy level of the electorates.

#### **4.3.3.1 Summary of key findings for theme three**

What can we conclude from the overview of the third theme, which focused at the extent to which the prevailing accountability framework is able to sustain utilisation of scientifically generated evidence? This theme has focused on tracing the uses and demand for performance information,

particularly evaluation findings. Findings of this study on the extent to which the prevailing accountability framework is able to sustain utilisation of scientifically generated evidence could be summarized as follows:

- The transparency of the sampled departments is compromised due to the reluctance of departments in making evaluation findings public; whether positive or negative. Only 40% of the interviewees provided information which suggest that their departments always (positive or critical) share evaluation findings.
- Policy Evaluation findings are hardly incorporated to annual and quarterly reports because either evaluations are not done frequently or the formats of such reports do not allow for this kind of information to be included. For instance, only 15% of the interviewees indicated that evaluation findings are incorporated to performance reports even if they are critical of the department.
- Most strategic and budget decisions taken by sampled departments are not based on systematic evidence (objectively verified performance information). For instance, only 30% of the interviewees indicated that evaluation findings are fairly considered, without prejudice to findings that are critical of the department, during strategic and budgetary decision-making engagements.
- Incentives for doing evaluation in the sampled departments are very weak. For instance, only 30% of the interviewees indicated that there are incentives for evaluations in their departments.
- Parliament's success in holding departments accountable on administrative matters has not been translated to strategic ones; especially on the quality of performance information contained in annual reports. Thus, only 25% of the interviewees indicated that Parliament has succeeded in holding departments accountable on the performance of their policies. Most of the interviewees attributed this weakness to the research and strategic capacity of Parliament
- The overwhelming majority that is enjoyed by the ruling political party (ANC) in parliament together with the party-list electoral system compromise the independence of parliamentarians and thus limit parliamentarians ability to hold their comrades accountable on the performance of their policies.

#### 4.4 Conclusion

In summary, findings of this study confirm the apprehension of the ANC on the general absence of reliable and appropriate performance information required to evaluate policy performance and gauge the impact of government's policy decisions. This study attributes this poor state of performance information to three factors. Firstly, notwithstanding the efforts made by government, through the GWM&E system, to institutionalize outcomes-based evaluation systems, evaluation systems are far from being well-established in most sampled government departments. Evaluation systems in the sampled departments are generally weak; characterised by uncoordinated policy evaluation mechanisms and evaluation systems that are under construction, misaligned to the GWM&E policy framework, and produce fragmented and questionable performance information.

Secondly, the prevailing data generation system is far from being evidence-based. This can be attributed to a number of factors. They include; lack of standardised data collection, analysis and verification mechanisms, poor use of scientifically generated evidence, and lack of mitigating mechanisms for the falsification or manipulation of research findings; that is, independent structures for verifying quality and objectivity of data as well as general lack of capacity required for successfully implementing an outcome-based evaluation approach that is embedded in an evidence-based system. The fundamental challenge for this theme is that which relates to loopholes in the balance of power between the political and administrative functions of government that results in political consideration trouncing technical concerns in decision-making. Thirdly, there is a weak demand for evaluation or scientifically generated evidence. This can be attributed to weak incentives for evaluation and political factors such as the capacity, independence and objectivity of parliamentarians.

The researcher concludes that the persistence of unreliable and inappropriate performance information at a departmental level despite considerable government-wide efforts aimed at improving the quality of performance information, suggests that a different strategy is required to turn around this situation. The researcher is of the view that the finding that there is uneven institutionalisation of M&E in government is a significant finding; one that should at some later stage be pointed out to government because it suggests that discussion about M&E in 2005-7 and the introduction of GWME in 2007 has been of little effect.



## CHAPTER 5: MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Introduction

The research problem which this study set to answer was stated in chapter 1 as the general absence of reliable and appropriate performance information required to evaluate policy performance and gauge the impact of government's policy decisions. Thus chapter 2 of this study was devoted to reviewing literature that explain processes that lead to the availability and usability of reliable and credible performance information (evidence to objectively demonstrate results and to account on the performance of policies). Reviewed literature suggested that in order for government to produce such evidence, institutionalisation of an outcomes-based evaluation system that is embedded in an evidence system, is crucial.

The purpose of this study was to explore the extent to which Evidence based and Results based management approaches are being applied in SA in the area of public policy with the aim of improving policy performance feedback. In order to achieve this purpose the research set to answer two main research questions: What strides have been made by SA towards an outcomes-based policy performance evaluation framework – “Where are we” and what are the gaps, and does embedding a monitoring and evaluation system in an evidence-based system contribute to an outcomes-based and accountable government? The following objectives were set to answer the above-mentioned research questions: i) to examine the extent to which departments apply the GWM&E Policy Framework; this is an overarching policy framework that ushers a new culture on M&E in SA and is predicated on a RBM approach, ii) to assess the manner in which government departments generate and use evidence throughout the policy lifecycle, and iii) to assess the impact of the existing accountability mechanisms on the utilisation of scientifically generated evidence in government.

This study has successfully achieved its three objectives. This achievement is demonstrated in chapter 4 where research findings are described and analysed. On the main this study found that:

- most of the departments' policy evaluation systems were not aligned to the GWM&E Policy Framework and thus not outcomes-based,
- the prevailing data generation system is far from being evidence-based, and
- the existing accountability mechanisms and incentives for evaluations were generally weak and therefore unable to sustain utilisation of scientifically generated evidence.

Recommendations of this study are aimed at addressing these findings and are aligned to the three themes that were identified in chapter 4. These themes are:

- The extent to which the prevailing evaluation system in government is based on an outcomes approach
- The nature of the evidence system in which the prevailing evaluation system in government is embedded
- The extent to which the prevailing accountability framework is able to sustain utilisation of scientifically generated evidence.

Recommendations are categorised into two sets; they are two-fold. The first sets of recommendations deal with improving the supply side of evaluation and are largely internally focused to government and are technocratic in nature. The second sets of recommendations deal with improving the demand side of evaluation and are cognisant of the political system within which evaluation takes place. Thus the first two research objectives and findings, which focus on the supply side of evaluation, are dealt with under the first sets of recommendations – strategy one. The third objective and finding, which focus on the demand side of evaluation, are dealt with under the second sets of recommendations – strategy two.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

### **5.2.1 First set of Recommendations – Strategy One**

A differentiated and comprehensive improvement support programme (DCISP) spearheaded by the centre of government is recommended for strategy one. The purpose of this support programme would be to turnaround poor evaluation practices in government and accelerate institutionalisation of the Outcomes-based Policy Evaluation system that is in an evidence system. The centre of government is the group of national departments/ public agencies whose primary roles are transversal in nature. They include DPME, National Treasury, DPSA, OPSC, Statssa and AGSA. As shown in chapter 3, these institutions are already playing important roles towards the realisation of an outcomes-based evaluation framework in governments.

Consolidation of different interventions into a comprehensive support programme would be a point of departure for this support programme. The DCISP would take a differentiated approach

to assessing the quality of evaluation practices in departments; this is a departure from a one-size fits all approach that is advocated by the DPME through the GWM&ES. This approach, a one-size fits all approach, fails to recognise the varying capacity of the departments. In the DCISP, the categorisation of departments would be comprehensive enough to develop targeted support strategies or interventions. In designing this support programme, differences between departments would have to be fully appreciated because varying evaluation capacities of departments require different types of interventions. Thus different strategies or interventions would be tailored to achieve specific outcomes in the different categories of departments. Therefore the DCISP would be designed to address the following challenges or gaps as identified by this study:

- In order to regulate evaluation practice within government departments, this study recommends institutionalisation of uniform and department-wide evaluation systems within the departments. By so doing, the amount of departments with fragmented evaluation systems that produce unreliable performance system would decrease.
- In order to increase department-wide evaluation systems that are outcomes-based, this study recommends that departments accelerate implementation of the GWM&ES. Such an intervention would improve generation of performance information throughout the policy lifecycle. However, the GWM&ES in its current form would have to be strengthened and modified to take into consideration the varying capacities of departments. One of the criticisms against the GWM&ES is that it lacks implementation guidelines.
- In order to build reliable ministry data systems to help provide the raw data on which M&E systems depend, institutionalisation of a department-wide and evidence-based system is recommended. Such an evidence-based system should regulate data collection, storage and dissemination practices. By so doing, quality of performance data that is made public would improve.
- Central to the success of implementing and sustaining evaluation system, is the availability of a competent human resource task force. Literature reviewed suggest that, for an M&E system to perform well, it is necessary to have well-trained officials or consultants who are highly skilled in M&E. Thus, most capacity-building plans place considerable emphasis on provision of training in a range of M&E tools, methods, approaches, and concepts. Governments that contract out their evaluations also need to ensure that their officials are able to oversee and manage evaluations (Mackay 2008:178).

As demonstrated in Chapter 3, there are a number of interventions that have been introduced by government since 2005 which aim to address the quality of performance information in government departments. They include: GWM&ES, which is driven by the Presidency; FMPPI, which is driven by the NT; Public Management Watch, which is driven by the DPSA; Performance Monitoring and Evaluation System, which is driven by the PSC; National Statistical System and South African Statistics Quality Assessment Framework (SASQAF), which are driven by the Statssa; and M&E Capacity Building Programmes, which are administered by PALAMA.

The shortfall of these interventions is that they are all based on a one-size fits all principle; they are not differentiated to fit the purpose. The implied assumption for these interventions is that departments are at the same level of need. However, as demonstrated in this study, departments' M&E capacity requirements vary. In order to address this shortfall on the existing initiatives, this study recommends that a DCISP for each department be informed by a diagnostic. Literature reviewed suggest that when strengthening departments' M&E systems, the point of departure should be a diagnosis of what M&E functions currently exist and their strengths and weaknesses, on both the demand and supply sides. Such diagnoses are themselves a form of evaluation. They are useful for the information and insights they provide, and also because they can be a vehicle for raising the awareness of the importance of M&E and the need to strengthen it (Mackay 2008:177). This study concludes therefore that conducting of diagnosis of M&E practices within departments would be a starting point towards improving generation of objective and utilizable performance information.

### **5.2.2 Second Set of Recommendations – Strategy Two**

This study appreciates progress made by government towards an outcomes-based evaluation approach; however, it is critical of the fact that, the government has adopted an overly technocratic (supply side of evaluation) approach to M&E. Literature reviewed shows that if demand for M&E is strong, then it can be relatively straightforward to improve supply in response, but the converse does not hold (Mackay 2007:54). Therefore, it is not enough to create a system that produces technically sound performance indicators and evaluations. Utilisation depends on the nature and strength of demand for M&E information, and this in turn depends on the incentives to make use of M&E (Mackay 2008:186). In order to strengthen the demand for M&E information, this study recommends that the following interventions must be intensified:

reforming of the electoral system, strengthening of the parliament's oversight role and capacity, strengthening of financial accountability mechanisms, and tightening of budget allocation processes.

#### **5.2.2.1 Reforming of the Electoral System**

It has been argued that the perceived lack of accountability of Members of Parliament to the public, as well as the poor link between the public and Parliament in general, can be ascribed to South Africa's party-list electoral system. This view is supported by the findings of this study as well as by the findings of the Independent Panel Assessment of Parliament (2009). This study found that the overwhelming number (82%) of interviewees believe that the current electoral system compromises the independence of parliamentarians. Thus, confirming findings of the Independent Panel Assessment of Parliament (2009:8) which found that the party-list system tends to promote accountability of Members of Parliament to their political parties rather than to the electorate.

In concurrence with the Independent Panel Assessment of Parliament, this study recognizes that alternative electoral systems also have drawbacks. The Panel strongly recommended that Parliament debates the relative merits of various electoral systems and considers the impact of these systems on the institution's ability to give expression to its Constitutional mandate. This study concurs with the view of the Panel that the current electoral system should be replaced by a mixed system which attempts to capture the benefits of both the constituency-based and proportional representation electoral systems.

#### **5.2.2.2 Strengthening of Parliament's Role and Capacity**

Parliamentary Portfolio Committees (hereafter referred to as Parliamentary Committees), play a central role in expressing Parliament's oversight mandate and thereby contributing to accountable government. Despite this magnitude responsibility, it is disturbing to note that Parliamentary Committees have no formal decision-making power; rather they advise the legislature on matters that they have considered. The role and effectiveness of Parliamentary Committees to ensure accountability by Departments, is further complicated by power struggles between the Parliamentary Committees themselves and the Executive, and also by capacity constraints within the Parliamentary Committees. In submissions to the Independent Panel Assessment of Parliament (2009) a lack of research support was a common concern among Chairpersons of

Parliamentary Committees. These concerns echoed earlier reports, which noted that Members of Parliament felt they lacked adequate research staff, that the available researchers did not have appropriate skills and that the present administrative structure did not allow researchers to develop the necessary technical skills to service the needs of Members of Parliament and committees properly.

This explains the findings of this study which found that only 25% of the interviewees indicated that Parliament has succeeded in holding departments accountable on the performance of their policies. Most of the interviewees attributed this weakness to the research and strategic capacity of Parliament. Thus, Portfolio committees are unable to challenge departments on their strategic directions. This study therefore recommends that research and strategic support functions be strengthened to ensure that Members of Parliament are in a better position to hold government departments accountable on the performance of their policies. It is also important that Parliament reviews and allocates the decision-making power to Parliamentary committees.

### **5.2.2.3 Strengthening of Financial Accountability Mechanisms**

As the vast majority of expenditure by the Executive and other organs of state is financed through taxes, it is essential that this expenditure is governed by a comprehensive accountability system. In South Africa it is the task of the AGSA to audit the financial statements of government on national, provincial and local spheres, as well as selected public entities. Within Parliament, the audited statements of government departments are referred to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts (Scopa). The responsibility of Scopa is to inspect the accounts and to follow up on issues that the AGSA has identified as audit queries. An article by Hamlyn in the Business Day (12 March 2007) titled —*Ms begin to question whether the Scopa watchdog needs real fangs*” summarizes the plight of the Scopa very well. Hamlyn wrote that —*if you keep a watchdog, tethered but fierce sounding, and it growls and shows its teeth, what do you do if miscreants take no notice but carry on with their nefarious work, regarding the noise and sour exhalations as a mere inconvenience, and no serious impediment to their task...*”.

Hamlyn contends that Parliament's financial watchdog (Scopa) must feel something like that. This is because Scopa produces report after report criticizing accounting officers in the hundreds of government departments, entities, and agencies that fail the annual test set by the auditor-general. This is after the AGSA has gone through their books, pointing out where they are in

breach of the law - generally in terms of the Public Finance Management Act - and decides whether their financial statements represent a fair assessment of their real financial situation. But what happens then? The loud barking dies down, the sour exhalations subside. The accounting officers mop their brows and go back to Pretoria and what exactly changes? The report of Scopa goes before the full house of Parliament, and is endorsed with loud tut-tutting from the opposition members. The recommendation of this study is that Scopa must be given more power so that the findings of the AGSA are enforced by law. That is, the department with qualified audits reports must suffer consequences.

#### **5.2.2.4 Tightening of Budget allocation processes**

Literature reviewed suggests that strong incentives are necessary if the evaluation function is to be successfully institutionalised in the organisation. Thus the value of evaluation does not come simply from conducting evaluations or from having performance information available; rather, the value comes from using the information to help improve government performance - demand. Demand focuses on the priority to use monitoring information and evaluation findings in support of core government activities. Uses include: to assist resource-allocation decisions in the budget process; to help ministries in their policy formulation and analytical work; to aid ongoing management and delivery of government services; and to underpin accountability relationships. Thus Policy-makers may need incentives to use evidence. These include mechanisms to increase the "pull" for evidence, such as requiring spending bids to be supported by an analysis of the existing evidence-base (Segone 2008:21).

One of the measures recommended by this study for enforcing provision of evidence-based analysis is the expenditure reviews which are aligned to budget decisions. The point of departure from the current practice is that such an expenditure review system would mean that the government is paying attention not only to the existing revenue base but also to the expenditure base; and that there is a requirement to reexamine issues that would otherwise be left unquestioned. This in turn improves the capacity of the budget system to deliver fiscal discipline, improves capacity to allocate and reallocate resources according to government priorities, enables changes that will improve operational and managerial efficiency and improves reliance on scientifically generated evidence.

Thus, increasing the “pull for evidence” factor in the system will put more pressure on departments to use reliable performance information when submitting their spending bids. In return, this creates more demand for evaluations. Consequently, this will force departments to institutionalise technically sound evaluation systems that produce reliable and appropriate performance information required to evaluate policy performance and gauge the impact of government’s policy decisions. Demand for evidence will further be exerted by parliament which is now more liberated to hold departments accountable. This liberation is brought about by the reformation of the electoral system, the strengthening of the role and capacity of Parliament, and the strengthening of the financial accountability mechanisms.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

This study though critical of the emerging policy evaluation framework in SA, acknowledges efforts made in the policy arena since 1994 (discussed in chapter 3). Thus, subsequent to identifying evaluations related challenges (discussed in chapter 4), this study took a prospective approach in outlining issues which government must grapple with in order to successfully institutionalise an outcomes-based policy evaluation system (discussed in chapter 5).

A consistent point argued in this study is that the problem of unreliable and inappropriate performance information would persist as long as government-wide interventions aimed at improving evaluation-use by government departments continue to focus on the supply side of evaluation in the expense of the demand side of evaluation. Further research is, however, required on how to successfully institutionalise an outcomes-based policy evaluation framework under the current political conditions; that is, the party-list electoral system and dominance of the ruling political party.

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*The End*



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## **ANNEXURE A: QUESTIONNAIRE**

<b>TITLE OF THE PAPER: TOWARDS AN OUTCOMES BASED POLICY EVALUATION FRAMEWORK IN</b>
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<b>SOUTH AFRICA</b>	
<b>ORGANISATION OF THE RESPONDENT</b>	
<b>POSITION OF THE RESPONDENT</b>	

### **PREAMBLE**

The purpose of this study is to explore whether the quality of performance (input, output and outcome) information can be associated with the application of an Evidence-Based Practice Approach (EBPA) throughout the policy lifecycle. The focus of this study is on the extent to which the South African government applies scientific evidence approach throughout the policy lifecycle; that is, policy formulation, policy implementation and policy evaluation. In this paper the researcher contends that vigorous application of scientific evidence throughout policy lifecycle increases chances of assessing whether policies are adding value or not.

This study involves a semi-structured interview which is designed to extrapolate research findings on the lived experiences and public policy knowledge of each participant. Participants have been selected based on their involvement on policy related work such as policy research, policy analysis or advisory and impact assessment. The study is being conducted by Mr Sihle Mthiyane for academic purposes, and it has been approved by the University of KwaZulu-Natal. No deception is involved, and the study involves no more than minimal risk to participants (i.e., the level of risk encountered in daily life).

Participation in the study typically takes 60 minutes. Participants are requested to answer a series of questions which are mostly open-ended. All responses will be treated with anonymity, and in no case will responses from individual participants be identified. Rather, all data will be pooled and published in aggregate form only. Participation is voluntary and participants may stop participation at any time without prejudice or damage to their reputation.

### **KEY CONCEPTS**

1. Evidence-Based Practice: in this paper refers to the integration of professional wisdom and scientifically based research to come up with best practices
2. Performance information: refers to input, activities, output, outcome and impact related information generated, to a large extent, through monitoring and evaluation means.

3. Systematic reviews: refers to research and evaluation evidence which has been systematically searched, critically appraised, and rigorously analysed, according to explicit and transparent criteria

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

#### Policy Evaluation Framework

1. Does your department have an evaluation system in place to evaluate its policies, and if so, how would you describe this evaluation system?

2. If your department does not have a policy evaluation system in place, what guides it in assessing and reporting on the performance of its policies?

3. In 2007 The Presidency published a Government-wide Policy Framework for the Monitoring and Evaluation System. How does the evaluation system in your department comply with this policy framework?

4. Has the introduction of this policy framework altered the manner in which your department evaluates its performance? Please substantiate your answer.

5. How does the evaluation system of your department enable or hinder the department to account on the performance of its policies?

6. How would you describe the type of performance data in your department; is it input, output or outcome bias? Please substantiate your answer.

#### Functionality of the Evidence-Based Strategy

7. Policy lifecycle consists of three phases; which are policy formulation, policy implementation and policy evaluation. During these phases how does your department generate evidence that supports or question its policies?

8. What are the criteria for assessing credibility of data that is generated throughout the policy lifecycle?

9. Do the elements of the criteria for assessing credibility of data, as identified above, require adherence to scientifically generated evidence, and if so, how?

10. Would you say that the manner in which your department generates evidence has contributed to the quality of performance data in your department? Please substantiate your answer.

11. What would you say is the frequency of the utilisation of scientifically generated evidence in your department throughout the policy lifecycle?

12. If scientifically generated data is not available, what other common sources of evidence does your department rely on when taking policy decisions?

### Science-Politics Interface

13. Do you have examples whereby political or personal considerations took precedence over scientific based evidence?

14. In outlining the functions of Parliament the Constitution states that the National Assembly must provide for mechanisms to ensure that all Executive organs of state in the national sphere of government are accountable to it, and further that the National Assembly must maintain oversight of the exercise of national Executive authority, including the implementation of legislation, and any organ of state. Given that Parliament has such a considerable responsibility, to what extent has Parliament been able to hold your department accountable for the performance of its policies?

15. In your view, does the South Africa's current electoral system encourages or discourages Members of Parliament to be accountable to their party rather than the electorate? Please substantiate your answer.

16. Do you agree or disagree with the view that utilisation of the externally generated scientific evidence in government, to a large extent, depends on the nature of the relationship between researchers and policy practitioners in your department, rather than on the credibility of evidence? Please substantiate your answer.

### Use of Evidence

17. Where policy evaluation has been conducted, are the findings made public?

18. Do the annual reports or any performance related reports of your department provide a fair and balanced account of the evaluation findings? Please substantiate your answer.

19. Would you say evidence emanating from policy evaluations are considered and reflected in your department's strategic and budget plans? Please substantiate your answer.

20. Are there any policy changes that you can attribute to research and evaluation findings in your department?

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21. Are there any incentives for conducting evaluations (policy or programme) in your department? Please substantiate your answer.

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22. Does your department maintain an accessible repository of policy evaluation reports?

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23. Where policy research and evaluation are undertaken in your department, to what extent are the findings based on systematic evidence (systematic reviews as opposed to single case studies)?

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**ANNEXURE B: LIST OF PARTICIPATING DEPARTMENTS**

<b>DEPARTMENT</b>	<b>INTERVIEWEE</b>	<b>NO. OF INTERVIEWEES PER DEPARTMENT</b>
1. Presidency	1. Interviewee	5
	2. Interviewee	
	3. Interviewee	
	4. Interviewee	
	5. Interviewee	
2. DSD	6. Interviewee	5
	7. Interviewee	
	8. Interviewee	
	9. Interviewee	
	10. Interviewee	
3. NT	11. Interviewee	5
	12. Interviewee	
	13. Interviewee	
	14. Interviewee	
	15. Interviewee	
4. COGTA	16. Interviewee	4
	17. Interviewee	
	18. Interviewee	
	19. Interviewee	
5. DPSA	20. Interviewee	4
	21. Interviewee	
	22. Interviewee	
	23. Interviewee	
6. DHA	24. Interviewee	3
	25. Interviewee	
	26. Interviewee	
7. DTI	27. Interviewee	3
	28. Interviewee	

DEPARTMENT	INTERVIEWEE	NO. OF INTERVIEWEES PER DEPARTMENT
	29. Interviewee	
DEPARTMENT	INTERVIEWEE	NO. OF INTERVIEWEES PER DEPARTMENT
8. PALAMA	30. Interviewee	2
	31. Interviewee	
9. DWA	32. Interviewee	2
	33. Interviewee	
10. DRDLR	34. Interviewee	2
	35. Interviewee	
11. DOC	36. Interviewee	1
12. PSC	37. Interviewee	1
13. DOE	38. Interviewee	1
14. GCIS	39. Interviewee	1
15. DPW	40. Interviewee	1

*Note: interviewees' names are concealed in honour of the anonymity clause in the Informed consent form that was signed by all interviewees. This clause states that all responses will be treated with anonymity, and in no case will responses from individual participants be identified. Rather, all data will be pooled and published in aggregate form only.*