Chapter 7

Monitoring and Evaluation Leadership Through Technology:
The South African Public-Sector Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Globally, governments are investing considerably in technology in the public sector. This intense investment in the use of technology is primarily aimed at enhancing public sector effectiveness and efficiency in delivering public goods and services. South Africa is fast-tracking the assimilation of technology in its service delivery mechanisms. However, despite the enormous investment, delivery of basic services is still dissatisfactory. Certainly, monitoring and evaluation use of technology has not also improved results as expected due to a range of challenges, ranging from varying digital literacy capacities of public servants tasked with monitoring and evaluation responsibilities, uncoordinated data flow from the various government units, as well as uneven application government policy where the use of technology for monitoring and evaluation is concerned. The chapter argues that there is a need for the government to revisit its strategy concerning the use of technology in the public sector and specifically in monitoring and evaluation.

INTRODUCTION

Monitoring and evaluation as a field and profession has gained traction in the last two decades. This acknowledgement by the profession has been due to the growing recognition by the donor community and government alike for the need to promote accountability and good governance. At the sametime, national governments have acknowledged that to establish and enhance efficiency in their country's public sector, monitoring and evaluation should be institutionalized as a management tool that drives its programmes towards efficiency in the public service. This institutionalization has facilitated a new order of public governance, namely, one that appreciates the important role that monitoring and evaluations plays in enabling effective public governance; secondly, the need to entrench accountability and performance in the public sector; thirdly, the opportunity to enhance government's own capacity to conceptualize, plan, implement and measure its own impact on its citizenry through its various interventions. In most governments, in both developed and undeveloped countries, have over the last decade institutionalized monitoring and evaluation, majority of them giving the profession its own stand along national department so it operates independently whilst other governments have placed the monitoring and evaluation in the highest political office, the Presidency. Indeed, this is an important step towards government efficiency in delivering public services to its citizenry.

However, all these trends are taking place at a time of technology revolution. Technology is has now become an enabler of service provision by both public and private sectors. Through technology, significant operational barriers that limited service provision have been eliminated and both sectors are constantly exploring effective ways to deliver on their respective mandates. In the public sector across the world, governments are rapidly embracing the use of technology in many ways. For instance, there is provision of government services through technology such as e-governance, which simply means, enabling access to government services through technology. On the same breadth, monitoring and evaluation as a profession, has not been left behind. The profession is quickly adapting to the use of technology in enhancing its own capacities to meet the growing needs of a dynamic public sector across the world.

Against this background, the task of this chapter is to discuss these trends described above, particularly the aspect of monitoring and evaluation leadership through technology using the South Africa public sector as a case study. Its main objective is to highlight the role of technology in enabling monitoring and evaluation leadership in the public sector. The South African public sector is still in the early stages of adopting the use of technology in monitoring and evaluation. However, monitoring and evaluation in the country is primarily driven by the national Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME), located in the presidency. This department

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