

SOUTH AFRICA: EVALUATION PRACTICES OF PUBLIC POLICIES: GOVERNANCE, INDEPENDENCE AND CREDIBILITY

BY CHARMAINE B. JULIE²⁸

INTRODUCTION

The primary monitoring and evaluation driver in South Africa is the Public Service Commission (PSC). It was established in the Constitution of 1996 to “investigate, monitor and evaluate” public administration without “fear, favour or prejudice.” Accountable to Parliament, the PSC falls outside the responsibility of the executive. As a result, it is perceived as independent and impartial and has the latitude to engage across the socio-economic and political spectrum, which it does with ease. It has been able to produce reports critical of the public service, which employs 1.1 million public servants, and to date has not had its work censored by the executive. Its independence has also enabled it to forge networks and establish partnerships that have enhanced transparency and accountability.

EVOLUTION OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

The original PSC, established in 1912, was fashioned on the British Civil Service Commission. Its primary function was to prevent favouritism in the appointment of public servants. It burgeoned by the 1980s into a vast and powerful statutory body, which ostensibly was apolitical, but in reality played a role in perpetuating the apartheid regime.

With the new Constitution, the PSC was re-established as an institution supporting constitutional democracy. It had multiple mandates, and between 1994 and 1996 evolved from an executive policymaking and implementing body into one focused exclusively on investigating, monitoring and evaluating public administration. With this new mandate, it has become the central M&E player in the country and has also provided support and leadership for the development of M&E at the regional and continental level. Today, it is different from its counterparts in most parts of the world, where the focus remains on administrative issues;

28. Regional Director, Western Cape Office of the Public Service Commission, with support from the Public Service Commission M&E Unit.

the PSC of South Africa has embraced and developed its mandate to become a key player in monitoring and evaluation.

The PSC is managed by a board made up of nine commissioners, one from each of the nine provinces, appointed by the President of South Africa. They may serve a maximum of two terms of five years each and are supported by an office staffed by civil servants. Thus the PSC has adequate capacity and skills to have an impact. The structure has not impeded the speed of its work, and having province-based commissioners aids in ‘unblocking’ problems at that level. The question of how findings are presented is being addressed by customizing approaches that seek to get the most influence in the shortest period of time (see annex 4 for organization chart).

NATURE AND SCOPE OF EVALUATIONS

The PSC has three focal areas:

- **Accountability:** The goal is to measure compliance with government regulation and policies, and where deviation from norms is identified, rate it as satisfactory or unsatisfactory in conjunction with other oversight or M&E bodies such as the auditor-general. In this focal area non-compliance leads to punitive measures.
- **Transparency:** Given the secretive nature of the Public Service under apartheid, the Constitution requires government to operate transparently. The PSC has produced an unprecedented level of transparency concerning government operations over the past decade. While transparency alone does not necessarily translate into accountability, it provides crucial information that allows civil society to hold government accountable. Most PSC reports provide very specific performance information on various areas of government, making it easy to identify where problems lie.
- **Enlightenment:** The PSC informs the public about its work in various ways, including media briefings, seminars, television and radio shows, roundtables and guest lectures. Stakeholders have had opportunities to discuss issues through conferences with specialized sectors, such as organized labour (Public Service Co-ordinating Bargaining Committee, 2007) and the M&E sector (South African M&E Conference, 2007 and 2009). Enlightenment efforts target different tiers of society and decision-making levels within government (table 1).

The PSC implements various M&E systems, each with a different purpose and relevant protocols. Two of the systems, detailed below, engage with management of departments and citizens.

Transversal public service monitoring and evaluation system

The PSC has designed a good-governance M&E system that assesses departmental performance across the nine constitutional values²⁹ and principles for public administration. The system, implemented since 2001, has thus far assessed over 100 departments. Indicators

29. As prescribed in chapter 10, section 195 (1) of the Constitution.

TABLE 1. PUBLIC INFORMATION ACTIVITIES OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

SCALE	EVENT/ACTIVITY	ENVISAGED OUTCOME
Continental/ international	Association of African Public Service Commissions in Africa	Increase transparency and accountability concerning governance in Africa, creating an enabling environment for M&E, which is also developing on the continent
	Co-hosted the 3rd African Evaluation Association Conference in 2004	Help improve M&E capacity in Africa, drawing participants from 61 countries to engage on the relationship between evaluation, development and democracy
	Participated in the training programme of the International Programme for Development Evaluation Training	Share South African experiences with the international community
Societal	National anti-corruption hotline	Monitor the connection between government and people, policy and practice
	Measurement of service delivery	Establish adherence to the <i>Batho Pele</i> (People First) principles
Departmental	Implementation of the Transversal Public Service M&E System	Provide management advice on how well the values and principles of public administration are being met and thereby prioritizing good governance
Individual	Management of the evaluations of heads of department	By focusing on the highest level of leadership, drive performance management through the public service

are chosen for each principle and value, and assessment takes place according to verifiable standards. Scores are awarded and recommendations are made and tracked. The implementation process seeks to ensure buy-in and takes approximately 3 months. A draft report is presented to the department’s top managers, who have 10 days to respond. The response may be considered in reviewing the draft score. Once the report is finalized, the department has 6 months to implement the recommendations, and the implementation is reported to relevant political and administrative structures.

The system is now well known and has reinforced other M&E work, as it also draws on existing evaluations, such as that of the auditor-general. This mutually reinforcing process institutionalizes performance management. The PSC has noted that compliance has improved slowly over time at the aggregate level. However, the pattern has been uneven, and in many cases the uptake on the initial set of recommendations has been poor, resulting in repeated poor assessments for several departments. Given that the system has not changed significantly over time, it is concerning that departments continue to score poorly in some of the areas critical to good governance, such as poor public participation and inadequate decision-making processes. The turnover in management may contribute to the limited improvements seen to date.

Citizen monitoring and evaluation system

Through announced and unannounced inspections, the PSC has tested the extent to which public services are provided according to the People First standards. These eight standards stipulate how government departments should operate and what citizens can expect of

them. Several surveys have been conducted and investigations undertaken, resulting in reports that were presented to political leaders for action. Last year the focus was on police stations, and this year it was on clinics. These reports provide an objective assessment of services provided. By tracking implementation of the recommendations, one can see whether this form of M&E is delivering the expected results.

This approach allows participation by stakeholders, which allows their insights and expertise to be harnessed to help government improve. Such an approach raises credibility and respect, which are important when it comes to producing and presenting evaluation findings.

RESULTS OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

The main purpose of M&E in the PSC has been to improve transparency and accountability and instil a performance ethos. M&E makes an important contribution to the reform and modernization process of government in South Africa. Apart from its very important contribution to democracy, it helps in increasing levels of State transparency and accountability. It has also:

- Improved the receptiveness of government to being measured, which leads to internal review of its operations, thereby instilling a performance ethos. The guidelines by the National Treasury, Auditor-General and Department of Public Service and Administration, particularly regarding planning and reporting, have for the first time quantified what needs to be done and with what resources.
- Increased the level of results orientation. In the past, departmental annual reports largely covered activities. Now they are based on indicators, which assist with M&E.

The use of information

The PSC has translated the constitutional values and principles into interventions and products, which have been directed to different client bases. These include Parliament and its committees, which carry out political oversight based on the evidence gathered from PSC reports; and political and administrative heads of government departments, which use the reports to address areas of concern identified through monitoring and evaluation, therefore improving governance.

The PSC's management of the head of department evaluation framework, its advice on performance agreements and its evaluation of leadership practices through the key performance area 'leadership and performance improvement' contribute to achievement of a high standard of public leadership.

The outcomes achieved are:

- Effective linkage of strategic objectives with agreed individual performance outcomes;
- Improved integrity among the public service leadership;
- Rewards for good performance and corrective actions for poor performance among heads of departments;
- Improved levels of individual and institutional performance.

There are also some requirements for effective functioning of M&E, including:

- Engagement of civil society through conferences and seminars;
- Engagement of the academic sector, by presenting papers, soliciting critical comment on reports (e.g. the State of the Public Service roundtables);
- Organized labour, by co-hosting the Public Sector Co-ordinating Bargaining Chamber conference;
- The M&E community, by co-hosting the African Evaluation Association 2004 event, subsequent support to the association and co-hosting of the 2007 and 2009 biennial conferences of the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association (SAMEA);
- Continental associations set up to promote good governance, which helped form the Association of African Public Service Commissions, a body meant to support good governance in Africa;
- The media, through regular press briefing on its reports and findings.

This indicates an appreciation of the importance of building strategic alliances and engaging with a cross-section of society. The PSC sees engagement as a tool to influence decision-making and public policy, and it has built a track record attesting to the validity of that approach.

FUTURE STEPS

The PSC is moving into a new phase in which it will more directly support M&E capacity-building initiatives around the country. It will produce guides and assist newly appointed M&E practitioners in many departments. This work will focus on developing expertise in the provinces, given that M&E is concentrated at the national level, despite the fact that most of the departments and the population are not. The PSC seeks to collaborate with SAMEA in this effort.

The PSC augments its work with research by the auditor-general and research units in the country and abroad, attempting to avoid duplication of effort. Through a memorandum of understanding with SAMEA following its 2009 conference, the PSC will work more directly with NGOs and the research sector. The PSC faces no overt competition from other M&E sectors in the country, possibly due to the level of cooperation that has been established.

ANNEX 1. PUBLIC SERVICE TRANSVERSAL M&E SYSTEM: PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND APPLICABLE POLICIES AND REGULATIONS

PROCESS OF IMPLEMENTING PSM&E IN DEPARTMENTS

CONSTITUTIONAL PRINCIPLE	PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	APPLICABLE LEGISLATION AND REGULATIONS
<p>1. Professional ethics A high standard of professional ethics must be promoted and maintained</p>	<p>Cases of misconduct involving a disciplinary hearing comply with the provisions of the Disciplinary Code and Procedures for the Public Service</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disciplinary Codes and Procedures for the Public Service • Public Service Coordinating Bargaining Council Resolution 2 of 1999 as amended by Public Service Coordinating Bargaining Council Resolution 1 of 2003 • Code of Conduct for the Public Service
<p>2. Efficiency, economy and effectiveness Efficient, economic and effective use of resources must be promoted</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expenditure is according to budget • Programme outputs are clearly defined and there is credible evidence that they have been achieved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Finance Management Act, Act 1 of 1999, Sections 38 to 40 • Treasury Regulations. Part 3: Planning and Budgeting • Public Service Regulations. Part III/B. Strategic Planning • Treasury Guidelines on preparing budget submissions for the year under review • Treasury Guide for the preparation of annual reports of departments for the financial year ended 31 March • National Planning Framework
<p>3. Public administration must be development oriented</p>	<p>The department is effectively involved in programmes/projects that aim to promote development and reduce poverty</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 195 (c) of the Constitution
<p>4. Impartiality and fairness Services must be provided impartially, fairly, equitably and without bias</p>	<p>There is evidence that the Department follows the prescribed procedures of the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act when making administrative decisions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of Administrative Justice Act, Act No 3 of 2000 • Regulations on Fair Administrative Procedures, 2002 • Departmental delegations of authority
<p>5. Public participation in policymaking People's needs must be responded to and the public must be encouraged to participate in policymaking</p>	<p>The department facilitates public participation in policymaking</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White Paper for Transforming Public Service Delivery (Batho Pele)

CONSTITUTIONAL PRINCIPLE	PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	APPLICABLE LEGISLATION AND REGULATIONS
<p>6. Accountability Government must be accountable</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate internal financial control and performance management is exerted over all departmental programmes • Fraud-prevention plans, based on thorough risk assessments, are in place and are implemented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Finance Management Act, Act 1 of 1999 • Treasury Regulations. Part 3: Planning and Budgeting • White Paper for Transforming Public Service Delivery (<i>Batho Pele</i>) • Public Service Regulations. Part III/B. Strategic Planning • Treasury Guidelines on preparing budget submissions, 2002 • Treasury Guide for the preparation of annual reports of departments for the financial year ended 31 March • National Planning Framework
<p>7. Transparency Transparency must be fostered by providing the public with timely, accessible and accurate information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The departmental annual report complies with National Treasury's guideline on annual reporting • The Department complies with the provisions of the Promotion of Access to Information Act 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Finance Management Act 1999, Act 1 of 1999 • Treasury Guideline for the preparation of annual reports • The Department of Public Government's Guide for an oversight report on human resources • Public Service Commission. Evaluation of Departments' Annual Reports as an Accountability Mechanism. October 1999 • White Paper for Transforming Public Service Delivery (<i>Batho Pele</i>) • Promotion of Access to Information Act 2000, Act 2 of 2000 • Departmental delegations of authority
<p>8. Good human resource management and career development practices Good human resource management and career development practices must be cultivated to maximize human potential</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vacant posts are filled in a timely and effective manner • The department complies with the provisions of the Skills Development Act 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Service Regulations, 2001 as amended • Public Service Act
<p>9. Representativity Public administration must be broadly representative of South Africa's people, with employment and personnel management practices based on ability, objectivity, fairness and the need to redress the imbalances of the past to achieve broad representation</p>	<p>The Department is representative of the South African people and is implementing diversity management measures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part VI Public Service Regulations, 2001 as amended • Employment Equity Act, Act 55 of 1998 • White Paper on the Transformation on Public Service – 15/11/1995 • White Paper on Affirmative Action in the Public Service, 2001 • White Paper on Disability

ANNEX 2. PUBLIC SERVICE TRANSVERSAL M&E SYSTEM, RESEARCH STEPS

PROCESS OF IMPLEMENTING PSM&E IN DEPARTMENTS

1. Notification to sampled departments

- Send letters to department, Minister, MEC and DG/HoD explaining the purpose, process and requesting a contact person.
- Attach PSM&ES Assessment Framework and list of documents needed.



2. Introductory meeting with department

- Obtain name of a contact person within the department
- Meet with HoD and top management of department to explain the PSM&ES and obtain buy-in.



3. Produce draft report

- Obtain and analyse information.
- Assess performance against defined performance indicator(s) for each principle.
- Identify areas of good practice and/or problem areas.
- Write main and summary report.



4. Presentation of draft results to department

- Discuss results of assessment with HoD and top management of department.
- Give opportunity to submit written comments within 10 days of presentation.



5. Final report

- Include comments of department in report and make amendments if necessary.
- Submit final report to PSC for approval.
- Send approved report to department.



6. Consolidated report

- Collate information of individual reports into one consolidated report.
- Submit report to Parliament and Executive Authorities.

ANNEX 3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE PSC'S TRANSVERSAL PUBLIC SERVICE MONITORING AND EVALUATION TOOL

PSM&E TOOL

ITEM	DESCRIPTION
Reporting period	<p>This reassessment of the department was conducted during the PSC's 2009/10 evaluation cycle and covers the following periods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principles 2, 6, and 7: Information obtained from the department's annual report for the 2007/08 financial year Principles 1, 3 to 5 and 8 to 9: The most recent information up to 18 May 2009 (date of the final draft report)
Introduction and background	<p>The PSC has designed, piloted and implemented a Transversal M&E System that it uses to evaluate the performance of departments against the nine constitutional values and principles governing public administration.</p> <p>Since the introduction of the system the PSC has evaluated 101 departments. During the 2009/2010 research cycle 2 national and 28 provincial departments were evaluated.</p> <p>The results of this report were presented to the Department with a request for comments, which were submitted and incorporated into the Executive Summary.</p>
Methodology	<p>The methodology involves comparing the actual state of practice in the department against at least five standards per principle. Evidence about the actual state of practice is obtained by collecting documents and records and conducting interviews on small samples of specific cases. At the end of the evaluation a draft report is written and the department is awarded a score.</p> <p>Since the same indicators are used every year, the performance of a sample of departments in a specific year can be compared with the samples of previous years, departments can be compared with each other and a department's performance can be compared with its own performance in a previous year when that department comes up for re-assessment.</p> <p><i>(The detailed assessment framework is available on the PSC's web page: www.psc.gov.za.)</i></p>
Final result of evaluation	<p>Comparative performance results between the first assessment (2004/05) and the reassessment (2009/10)</p> <p>The Department's performance and compliance with the nine constitutional values and principles have improved from an average score of 36 percent for 2004/05 to 55 percent for 2009/10, which is indicative of adequate performance against several of the standards.</p> <p>Strengths</p> <p>The Department's performance against only four out of the nine principles was above the average performance of 55 percent for the 2009/10 evaluation cycle. These four principles are 3 (90 percent), 4 (100 percent), 6 (90 percent) and 7 (80 percent). Compared to the 2004/05 evaluation, improvement in performance occurred in 2009/10 against principles 1, 3, 4, 6 and 7, with the score varying between 30 percent and 80 percent.</p> <p>Weaknesses</p> <p>A cause of concern is the decline in performance during the 2009/10 evaluation cycle against the 2004/05 evaluation in principles 5 (public participation in policymaking), 8 (human resource management) and 9 (representivity). The decline of performance against these four principles is indicative of poor project and human resource management, which needs attention.</p>
Recommendations	<p>Status of implementation of recommendations of first assessment</p> <p>When the Department was assessed for the first time in the 2004/05 evaluation cycle 36 recommendations were made of which 18 (or 50 percent) were implemented when the Department was re-assessed in the 2009/10 evaluation cycle. Of concern is that the majority of the recommendations that were not implemented falls within Principle 8 (good human resource management and career development practices) and Principle 9 (diversity management). Consequently the PSC is now making even more recommendations with regard to these principles. In light of the dire need for departments to deliver services, poor human resource management in the Department needs urgent attention.</p> <p>New recommendations</p> <p>The PSC made 59 recommendations that need to be implemented within specific time frames. Within six months of receipt of this report the PSC will follow up on the progress made, using the list of recommendations at Appendix A as a template for the feedback report.</p>

ANNEX 4. ORGANIZATION CHART OF THE PSC

