

Measuring Effectiveness and Efficiency of Governmental Programmes in Developing Countries

Significance, Techniques and Challenges

M O Dassah

Faculty of Informatics and Design
Cape Peninsula University of Technology
South Africa

ABSTRACT

This article discusses the significance, techniques and challenges of measuring the effectiveness and efficiency of governmental programmes and highlights the need for developing countries, particularly in Africa, not just to monitor, but also evaluate and utilise findings. A shift from implementation of monitoring to results-based monitoring and evaluation (RBM&E) in public sector management has put governments globally under pressure to show tangible results produced by programmes they initiate. Governmental programmes are results-based, designed and deployed to achieve specific external social objectives. RBM&E involves performance monitoring and evaluation, that is, tracking programmes, comparing their initial results with targets, providing feedback and facilitating corrective action, and establishing why programme outcomes and impacts are, or are not, being achieved. Therefore, it is essential to improving service delivery, achieving effectiveness, efficiency and providing value for money.

The article also examines techniques of assessing programme effectiveness and efficiency. Creation of the Ministry of Planning and Ministry of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation within the South African Presidency is seen as signalling a new attitude to effectiveness and efficiency measurement in government. Challenges to measuring programmes' effectiveness and efficiency are highlighted as well as the sporadic use of evaluation in Africa. The need for an entrenched evaluation culture in the public sectors of African countries, which tend to have a not-so-successful record of programme performance, is argued as essential for widespread successful management of governmental programmes. Greater focus



on monitoring and near-neglect of evaluation results in lost opportunities for learning vital lessons from successes and failures, and also weakens utilisation of findings. This argument is advanced against the backdrop of widespread success of many governmental programmes in the public sectors of European Union countries and the United States resulting from institutionalised evaluation.

INTRODUCTION

A variety of internal and external socio-economic pressures, including anti-corruption initiatives, meeting the Millennium Development Goals, indebtedness, implementation of poverty reduction initiatives, budgetary constraints and concomitant trade-offs in resource utilisation, among others, have resulted in greater accountability, transparency, and effectiveness in government (Kusek & Rist 2004:1) an imperative for developing countries. The World Bank (1997:2) has acknowledged a global crisis in government performance, noting: “the clamor for greater government effectiveness has reached crisis proportions in many developing countries where the state has failed to deliver even such fundamental public goods as property rights, roads, and basic health and education”.

Concomitantly, public trust in governments has waned for a number of reasons, one being erosion of service quality in the public service (Roberts 2005:2). Reinventing government through New Public Management public sector reforms has focused on results orientation. Measuring government performance has, therefore, assumed critical importance. The main issues in government performance are twofold: firstly, whether public sector managers are performing the right functions and, secondly, whether they are doing them right. The first aspect concerns delivering services citizens prefer; the second concerns providing quality services at the least cost (Shah 2005:xxiii). Implicit in the latter are issues of effectiveness (whether objectives are being achieved), efficiency (judicious use of resources) and value for money (whether citizens are getting their money's worth).

Results-based monitoring and evaluation (RBM&E) involves performance monitoring and evaluation. These are complementary techniques governments can employ to increase programmes' effectiveness and efficiency. Monitoring concerns routine workings of programmes in terms of design and operation, focusing on inputs, intermediate outputs (or throughputs) and short-term or immediate outputs. Its currency is performance measures (Boyle & Lemaire 1999:101) which should be clear, relevant, economic, adequate and monitorable (Kusek & Rist 2004:68). Evaluation deals with fundamental questions of programme existence, drawing heavily on monitoring data (Maynard & Zapico-Göni 1997:5).

CENTRALITY OF MEASURING PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

Behn (1995:315) proposes three main questions public management scholars should be attempting to answer in the 21st century:

- the micromanagement question;
- the motivation question; and
- the measurement question.

For the measurement question, the issue is: "How can public managers measure the accomplishments of their agencies and of themselves?" (Behn 1995:315) This question is at the root of performance measurement (monitoring) and evaluation in government. In fact, performance measurement abounds in public sector management literature. It is "(arguably) the hottest topic in government today" (Blodgett & Newfarmer 1996:6, cited in Behn 2003:586). Halachmi (2002a:370) asserts that: "during the past 20 years, performance measurement has become a salient item for governments all over the world". Allen (1996), cited by Halachmi (2002c:230) further notes that: "continuing pressures for improved accountability and greater value-for-money performance have prompted governments at all levels to recognise the need for program performance measurement".

DEFINING A PROGRAMME

Governments mainly operate by formulating policies, designing programmes and implementing them to achieve desired social objectives. Rutman and Mowbray (1983:12-13) define a programme as an intervention or set of activities mounted to achieve external objectives, that is, recognised social needs or solutions to identified social problems. Roysse, Thyer, Padgett and Logan (2001:5) view governmental programmes as a series or collections of planned or organised activities, not random actions, aimed at solving or ameliorating problems. Success of programmes is not only important for governments to fulfil their mandate, but also serves to enhance beneficiaries' (citizens') lives. It is a moot point whether governmental programmes in many African countries genuinely achieve this purpose.

PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE AND OTHER PUBLIC SECTOR PERFORMANCE MEASURES

In spite of the prominence of performance measurement, *performance* is not an uncontroversial term. In fact, there is little consensus on what it means (Lebas 1995:23), it cannot be defined objectively (1995:26). Therefore, it is essential to clarify this term from the public sector perspective. The private sector has profit to show as the ultimate measure of its success. Government does not have an equivalent except electoral success, but this has nothing to do with the quality of programmes implemented. In fact, in both developed and developing countries, quality is rarely associated with government service (Alberta Treasury 1996:27). So the question is: What has the public manager, and by extension government, got to show that a job is well done? The answer lies in the performance of programmes implemented and their impact on citizens' lives.

Maynard and Zapico-Göni (1997:5) state that a "*well-performing public program or service* is one that is providing, in the most cost-effective manner, intended results and benefits that continue to be relevant, without causing undue unintended effects". According



to them, a number of authors have contributed other public sector performance measures. These include equity, entrepreneurship and excellence (Gunn, 1988), efficacy and electability (Bovaird, Gregory & Martin 1988; and Fynn, Gray, Jenkins & Rutherford 1988); and ethics (Jackson 1991), but “the best known performance measures are the traditional 3Es of *economy, efficiency, and effectiveness*”.

This is not, however, to undermine the legitimacy of the other measures. Treating the public as clients, consumers and partners of government services, for example, is the essence of excellence and equity in the public sector. Johnsen and Vakkuri (2006:292) refer to performance measurement as “those social instruments, performance indicators (Rossi, Freeman & Lipsey 1999:366), of efficiency, effectiveness and equity that are intended to be used to improve rational decision-making in administrative and political processes”. For Hatry (1980:312), in the context of government, performance measurement is the systematic assessment of how well services are being delivered to a community – both how efficiently and effectively.

Although these terms are different, they are complementary and the link between them is important. Efficiency has to do with the relation between inputs and outputs produced. Effectiveness, involves impacts, quality of service delivery, whether the service achieves its purpose and its responsiveness to community needs. The salience of effectiveness and efficiency as measures of public sector performance are, thus, well grounded in the literature.

SIGNIFICANCE

In diagnosing dissatisfaction with the results of public policies among beneficiaries and those delivering them, a United States government official is reported to have said that:

... the federal government has developed two defects that are central to its existence: (a) it does not know how to tell whether many of the things it does are worth doing at all, and (b) whenever it does decide something is worth doing, it does not know how to create and carry out a program capable of achieving the results it seeks (Nachmias 1979:1-2, citing Duncan 1975).

This observation reflects what governments in many developing countries today are faced with and underlines the essence of public sector managers not only understanding citizens' needs but, more importantly, designing well-tailored programmes with clear goals and objectives to facilitate measurement of performance. Wholey, Newcomer and Associates (1989:5) state that: “in government, where resources typically are determined by budget allocations rather than by market forces, doing a good job is not enough; it is also necessary to be perceived as doing a good job”. That many roads, hospitals or schools have been built or so much money has been spent merely indicates how busy government has been. As inputs, these are not indicators of what has been achieved (Alberta Treasury 1996:3). In essence, then, it is a myth that once government is determined to do something and has allocated sufficient funding, its goals will partly be achieved (Nachmias 1979:2).

Providing good service and demonstrating giving value for money are two ways the public sector can account to citizens (Maynard & Zapico-Göni 1997:10). Concerns for

delivering services to meet citizens' needs and proof of the judicious use of limited resources imply that public sector managers need not only to plan what they do and monitor how they do it, but also show how well they have done it. This is the essence of RBM&E. It emerged in the 1980s and has assumed pre-eminence in the public sectors of developed and developing countries as a result of growing pressures on governments to improve their performance (Kusek & Rist 2004:14) and show tangible results. To be sure, it is no longer enough to merely keep track of programmes through monitoring alone. Emphasis has shifted to evaluation, that is, determining whether or not they have achieved their objectives, presumed benefits and impacts. All governments have monitoring systems of some sort. However, governments in many developing countries, particularly in Africa, do not as yet have effective RBM&E systems, particularly institutionalised evaluation systems, if any at all. An RBM&E system enables government to provide evidence to citizens of having achieved promised results (Kusek & Rist 2001:15).

Managing for results is a call for the public sector to regain the confidence of citizens who demand change (Julnes & Holzer 2001:694). RBM&E is the means for governments to respond to the need to provide "transparent, trustworthy, and readily available evidence" of having achieved results (Kusek & Rist 2004:15). It capitalises on traditional M&E by linking implementation and results assessment, thus coupling implementation progress with progress in attaining objectives to measure programme effectiveness and efficiency. Further, it is a powerful public management tool governments can use to improve achievement of results because it constitutes a good performance feedback and results demonstration system (Kusek & Rist 2004:xi).

In one era emphasis has shifted from traditional implementation-based approaches towards new results-based approaches, it is simply not enough to dwell on traditional implementation-based monitoring and evaluation because governmental programmes should be measured in terms of whether they have achieved intended results, rather than how well they have been implemented. Good intentions of government and good programme implementation are no guarantee of success. However, by emphasising programme outcomes and impacts over inputs and outputs, a government can demonstrate to citizens it can fulfil electoral promises and its programmes can be relied on to yield benefits. In short, managing for results matters because successful programme implementation is not synonymous with improved lives of citizens. Kusek and Rist (2001:15) note that: "when a government switches its focus from measuring whether a program is 'on track' to whether the program is achieving its desired objectives or goals (results), its overall performance improves".

According to Kusek and Rist (2004:12), "what typically has been missing from government systems has been the feedback component with respect to outcomes and consequences of governmental actions". Therefore, the need for governments in developing countries to develop RBM&E systems that "measure and evaluate outcomes, and then feed this information back into the ongoing processes of government and decision making" cannot be under-estimated. Such a feedback system adds to the three-legged stool of a good human resource, a financial and an accountability system to complete the cycle.

Taylor (1992:460) underlines the need for effective public reporting of governmental programmes. According to the author:

Taxpayers have the right to know:

- the real goals of government programmes;



- how effective how these programs are in achieving those goals;
- what unintended effects result from the programmes, and
- a right to expect the government to put effective measures in place to do this (Mayne 1997:163).

Hatry (2005:86) highlights several vital purpose results measurement and reporting of public programmes serve:

- outcome information helps in allocating funds to problem areas, thereby facilitating efficient use of limited resources;
- information on how well or badly programmes are performing is obtained by public officials, helping them improve service to citizens;
- it identifies the level of change in service quality and results following service improvement actions;
- it helps in making budgeting decisions such that funding is allocated to programmes likely to produce maximum benefits to citizens;
- agencies/departments become more accountable for results to elected officials and the public; and
- it has potential to increase public trust in government.

Perhaps the most forceful way of emphasising the essence of measuring governmental programmes is to highlight benefits accruing from such measurement as highlighted by Osborne and Gaebler (1992:146) and expanded on by Halachmi (2002b:65; 2005:503):

- What gets measured gets done.
- If you do not measure results, you cannot tell success from failure.
- If you cannot see success, you cannot reward it.
- If you cannot reward success, you are probably rewarding failure.
- If you cannot see success, you cannot learn from it.
- If you cannot recognise failure, you cannot correct it and on the positive side.
- If you can demonstrate results, you can win public support.
- If you cannot measure it you do not understand it;
- If you cannot understand it you cannot control it;
- If you cannot control it you cannot improve it;
- If they know you intend to measure it, they will get it done;
- If you do not measure results, you cannot tell success from failure.
- If you cannot see success, you cannot reward it;
- If you cannot reward success, you are probably rewarding failure;
- If you will not recognise success you may not be able to sustain it;
- If you cannot see success/failure, you cannot learn from it;
- If you cannot recognise failure, you will repeat old mistakes and keep wasting resources; and
- If you cannot relate results to consumed resources you do not know what is the real cost.

In spite of the importance of evaluating governmental programmes and the global clamour for greater government effectiveness in achieving programmatic results, a study by Furubo,

Rist and Sandahl have identified only islands of evaluation activities in many countries, but “little evidence of any national evaluation initiatives in the public sectors” (2002:7). In Africa, only Zimbabwe featured among the 21 countries reported to have an evaluation culture or showing signs of developing one.

An entrenched evaluation culture is essential for developing countries in the light of the fact that in the absence of a national evaluation system, “there is little objective evidence that one can turn to ascertain the consequences of governmental actions and programs”. As has been argued, measuring results holds valuable benefits. RBM&E findings may be utilised in different ways. Three are particularly crucial for developing countries: to explore and investigate which programmes work, which do not and why; to demonstrate accountability to citizens; and to promote understanding of programmes (Kusek & Rist 2004:130). These benefits, particularly the first, are lost where RBM&E is not institutionalised as is the case in most African countries and partly explains the perennial ineffectiveness of many governmental programmes. Institutionalisation of RBM&E in the European Union and United States accounts for increased effectiveness of programmes.

Concern for effectiveness of governmental programmes is currently high in South Africa. The Zuma administration has established a Ministry of Planning and a Ministry of Performance, Monitoring and Evaluation in response to protracted service delivery protests. A foundation for an RBM&E, anchored on planning and measuring progress through performance indicators is being laid. In the past, education and health sectors were generously funded to a combined tune of 30% of government expenditure (Green Paper 2009:5), but have not yielded the desired results. Lack of political will, inadequate leadership, inappropriate institutional design, misaligned decision rights and lack of a strong performance culture that rewards and punishes have been cited as some of the reasons government has failed to meet its objectives in delivering quality services (Green Paper 2009:3). Indicators of governmental programme performance are a *sine qua non* for evidence of tangible outcomes to be shown. Having explained the significance of measuring programme effectiveness and efficiency, techniques of doing so are discussed in the next section.

TECHNIQUES

Measurement of programme effectiveness and efficiency are key aspects of the accountability perspective of evaluation, aimed at providing information to decision-makers. Effectiveness focuses on results only, without considering costs. According to Rossi *et al.* (1999:88), key questions include: Did the programme achieve its goals and objectives? How has the programme benefited recipients? Are there any negative unintended effects? Have all recipients benefited equally? Has the programme made the pre-existing situation better?

Efficiency measures both results and costs. It asks one fundamental question: What are the impacts of the programme in relation to its costs? Key issues include: Are resources used efficiently? Do the benefits justify the costs? Are there alternatives that would yield equivalent benefits at lower costs? (Rossi *et al.* 1999:88) In both cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness analyses costs are related to programme results. Techniques for measuring programme effectiveness and efficiency are briefly examined in the next two sections.



Measuring programme effectiveness: impact assessment

Effectiveness relates to programme outcomes. Therefore, it is an evaluation issue. The methodological approach used to handle questions of programme outcomes is impact assessment (also called impact, outcome or summative evaluation). Essentially, it is retrospective (Boyle & Lemaire 1999:82) and aims at finding out how well programmes have worked in order to provide information useful in making major decisions about continuation, expansion, reduction or even termination.

Governments often implement programmes to ameliorate social problems. Most programmes exist to provide benefits to citizens and are often assumed to work. Ultimately, however, there is a need to ascertain their effectiveness in achieving intended outcomes, changing social conditions and whether any unintended side effects occurred (Rossi *et al.* 1999:70). Impact assessment aims at determining effects achieved by the programme itself, excluding extraneous factors. This type of assessment assumes proper programme implementation and goal attainment and is appropriate “for mature, stable programs with a well-defined program model and a clear use for the results that justifies the effort ...” (Rossi *et al.* 1999:72). It calls for operationally defined goals, specification of criteria of success and measurement of progress towards the goals (Nachmias 1979:3). The key issue in impact assessment is determining incremental effects resulting from a programme, a fundamental requirement for making any causal inferences or accounting for any other possible explanations (Treasury Board of Canada, n.d.:14, hereinafter referred to as TBC). It is, therefore, essential to ascertain what would have happened if the programme had not been implemented – the counterfactual (TBC n.d.:12). However, according to the TBC, programmes involving behaviour-changing governmental interventions through grants, services or regulations are more amenable to establishing their incremental effects.

Depending on the degree of credibility required, availability of funding and expertise, designs that may be used, range from randomised experimental (most rigorous), quasi-experimental to implicit or pre-experimental designs (least rigorous). The level of rigour determines how plausible programme effects are. These designs are distinguished only by the degree to which comparison is made between groups that are identical in every way except for exposure to the programme (TBC n.d.:37). In the sections that follow, experimental, quasi-experimental and implicit designs are outlined.

Techniques of measuring impact

Randomised experimental designs

These array of designs give the best estimate or most conclusive evidence of programme results (TBC n.d.:40) because, by randomly assigning participants to a treatment or control group, randomised experimental designs ensure equivalence as each participant has an equal chance of being selected, thereby eliminating some threats to internal validity (TBC n.d.:43). The chief weakness of these designs lies in difficulty in implementing and the existence of threats to external validity and some threats to internal validity. All experimental designs typically involve two identical treatment and control groups for which initial measurement is made. Thereafter, only the treatment group is exposed to the programme. A second measurement is then taken of both groups and the incremental effect in the treatment group

is noted and attributed to the programme (TBC n.d.:38). Prominent among randomised experimental designs are: classical randomised comparison group, post-programme-only randomised comparison group, randomised block and Latin square, and factorial designs.

Quasi-experimental designs

These designs employ comparison groups similar to treatment groups, but not through randomisation. The groups may either not be exposed to the programme (constructed) or may be the treatment groups themselves before exposure (reflexive group) (TBC n.d.:46). This means the treatment and control groups are clearly not comparable (TBC n.d.:37). Examples of quasi-experimental designs, from most to least rigorous, are: pre-programme/post-programme, historical/time series and post-programme-only.

The pre-programme/post-programme design has two forms, namely: pre-programme/post-programme non-equivalent comparison group design with a constructed group and one group pre-programme/post-programme design involving a reflexive comparison group.

Historical/time series designs may involve a few measurements for a period before and after programme exposure and are associated with threats to internal validity or a comprehensive set of measures to minimise threats (TBC n.d.:47). Two examples of this design are: basic time series and time series design with a non-equivalent comparison group. Historical/time series designs are useful in analysing time-dependent programme effects and can address threats to internal validity, but availability of adequate data is often problematic.

As the name suggests, post-programme-only designs are used only after programme exposure and are highly susceptible to validity threats. Examples include: post-programme-only with non-equivalent control group and post-programme-only different treatments design.

In general quasi-experimental designs can be cheaper and more practical than randomised experiments, and yield very accurate findings. However, they require greater skill and have internal validity problems (TBC n.d.:50-51).

Implicit designs

Implicit designs involve only one group, the treatment group. There is no control group. The treatment group is exposed to the programme and measurement is taken. Any changes thought to have occurred are attributed to the programme. An assumption is made that a comparison group would not have experienced any change or not as much as the treatment group (TBC n.d.:38). Such designs are used when pre-programme measures and control groups are unavailable (TBC n.d.:52). They are flexible, versatile, can be implemented practically; and can address any issue. Their main weakness is difficulty in attributing results to programmes (TBC n.d.:54).

Measuring programme efficiency: cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness analyses

Efficiency is the umbrella term for cost-benefit (or benefit-cost) and cost-effectiveness analyses, both being economic models of evaluation. "The idea of judging the utility of social intervention efforts in terms of their efficiency ... has gained widespread acceptance" (Rossi, *et al.* 1999:366) in the public sector. Although governmental programmes are not always, and should not be, seen in monetary terms, money is a scarce resource with alternative uses.



Maximising taxpayer's value should be a cherished objective for governments. Measuring programme efficiency is critical for those that care to know the cost at which programmes have achieved (or not achieved) their goals or objectives. According to Royse *et al.* (1999:250), efficiency is based on the notion that programmes that provide the best results for the least cost are the most efficient. Cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit analyses are important because knowledge of programme effectiveness (impact) alone is insufficient as financial resources are limited and have alternative uses. In an economic environment where budgets are tight, governmental programmes compete against one another. Implementing one programme necessarily means foregoing another, an opportunity cost. For this reason, programme costs are often related to their effectiveness to facilitate comparison between programmes.

Efficiency analyses compel programme managers to consider the link among programme costs and benefits, judge the utility of programmes in relation to others and provide convincing evidence for continued funding (Rossi *et al.* 1999:366).

Cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness analyses may be conducted before programme implementation (*ex ante*), based on estimated costs and benefits or after the programme has been in operation for some time (*ex post*) to assess whether actual costs were justified by actual benefits. Cost-benefit is, however, typically done before implementation to determine net benefits of large programmes that require large investments (TBC n.d.:107).

Cost-benefit analysis

In cost-benefit analysis, tangible and intangible programme benefits are compared with direct and indirect costs. Benefits are expressed in monetary value to come to an understanding of "whether the costs of the intervention can be justified by the magnitude of the net effects" (Rossi *et al.* 1999:371). The net present value of benefits and costs are then calculated. Cost-benefit analyses may be based on an individual, government fiscal or social perspective. These offer different costs and benefits. The social perspective, which accounts for all costs to society, is preferable.

There are difficulties in specifying, measuring and valuing all programme costs and benefits, particularly in *ex-ante* analyses. Assumptions have to be made as there are no *correct procedures* to follow in converting costs and benefits, particularly the latter, into monetary values. Even in *ex-post* analyses data may be limited, making it necessary for additional sources or judgements to be used (Rossi *et al.* 1999:380). Further, difficulty or moral dilemmas may be encountered in calculating the monetary value of intangible programme benefits and some costs. For example, in a health programme it is impossible to attach a monetary value to human lives that are saved or have been lost.

The necessity of converting all programme outcomes and benefits to monetary value may, however, be overcome by adopting money measurements, market valuation, econometric estimation, hypothetical questions and observing political choices (Thompson 1980). Satisfaction has also been suggested an outcome variable (Royse *et al.* 2001:258).

Cost-effectiveness analysis

Cost-effectiveness analysis follows the same principles as cost-benefit analysis. Cost-effectiveness is preferred in many cases because of difficulty in monetising benefits associated with some programmes. Instead of being expressed in monetary terms, effectiveness is

expressed substantively in terms of specific results to be achieved, which are related to the monetary value of the costs (Rossi *et al.* 1999:390). In this way, comparison of different programmes with similar goals can be done on cost or input basis. Thus, cost-effectiveness analyses estimate inputs in monetary terms and outcomes in terms of actual impact. It is essential that costs and effects be considered from the societal perspective. Although impact assessment, cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness analyses are techniques for determining the effectiveness and efficiency of governmental programmes, a number of factors make these exercises difficult.

CHALLENGES

Four classes of factors, according to the Institute of Public Administration of Canada (n.d:n.p), namely: methodological, financial, government, and political and public service, constitute barriers to measuring the performance of governmental programmes. While these factors apply to developed countries, they are even more relevant to developing countries.

Methodological barriers

As is clear from the preceding discussion, the techniques for measuring effectiveness and efficiency of governmental programmes have associated difficulties or shortcomings. Methodological barriers to impact assessment relate to problems of establishing a direct relationship between inputs and outcomes as other factors may also influence outcomes. For example, building a hospital cannot categorically be linked to improved health of people living nearby because their health profile may have changed as a result of improved living conditions associated with hygiene or better eating habits. Specific methodological problems are associated with cost-benefit analysis (Royse *et al.* 2001:258). First, there is no consensus on how benefits are defined and different authors have used cost savings, return on investment and even abstract value-added concepts. Also, unit costs tend to be expressed in various ways. Further, unfamiliar economic concepts such as shadow pricing and discounting have crept into cost-benefit analysis.

Financial barriers

Financial barriers involve cost and time. Effective RBM&E systems for measuring the performance of governmental programmes are financially costly because technology, time and expertise are involved. Employees need to continuously collect, process, capture and store quantitative and qualitative data against the background of shortage of skilled M&E expertise in developing countries. With tight budgets, many countries have little money to mount even effective M&E systems.

Governmental barriers

Government barriers refer to the complexity of programmes and the tendency for programmes to have many objectives that keep changing. This makes developing appropriate



performance indicators a daunting task. Performance is not an objective reality (Wholey 1997:130) that has an independent existence. It hinges on the clarity of programme goals and clearly identified performance indicators. According to Weiss (1983:34), goals tend to be unclear or even conflicting because the process of getting programmes enacted involves persuasion and negotiation to get consensus among different interest groups. As such, expectation levels tend to be unrealistically high and goals are likely to be diffuse, unclear, unspecific, difficult to measure and incompatible. Theonig (2003:212) cites simple failure by government to evaluate:

there is reason to believe that the reluctance to use evaluation more extensively is not necessarily or primarily due to ignorance, cynicism or unwillingness. It sometimes happens that governments publicly affirm the need for evaluation, but fail to practice what they preach.

Political and public service barriers

Political and public service barriers constitute a formidable set of obstacles to measuring programme performance, especially in Africa. Evaluation, if it happens at all, is often in a highly charged political environment involving government and opposition. Government may use evaluation negatively in what Palumbo (1987:12) calls *political evaluation* to support or build the images of programmes. Further, political expediency may lead to government lacking political will to terminate programmes not working, but which have vote-pulling power. Similarly, public servants might make programmes appear good in terms of meeting the relevant performance indicators. This barrier is well articulated by Boyle and Lemaire (1999:8), thus: “a well-functioning evaluation system can penetrate the administrative and bureaucratic fog that enshrouds so much governmental action” and expose disincentives for many in government to support evaluation because of its perceived threat. On its part, the opposition has a formidable arsenal of ammunition with which to oppose government in the event of negative evaluation findings. Government’s fear of exposure to scrutiny and criticism is a factor in the infrequent use of evaluation in African countries.

Other political factors

According to Rossi *et al.* (1999:25), political considerations intrude in evaluation in three ways. In the first place, programmes are products of political decisions. Having been proposed, defined, debated, enacted and funded through political processes, they are subject to political pressures during implementation and politicians may decide whether or not they are evaluated. They might also influence the outcome. Weiss (1983:32; 1987:49) highlights this in noting that: “the programs with which the evaluator deals are not neutral, antiseptic, laboratory-type entities”. Weiss (1983:31) further states that: “having emerged from the rough-and-tumble of political support, opposition, and bargaining”, the programme “remains vulnerable” Also, evaluation reports compete with other issues of importance for political attention and do not always get it. Finally, the evaluation enterprise is not apolitical. Statements about some programmes being problematic, while others are beneficial or questioning of programme goals and strategies are of political import. That programmes are products of political decisions has implications for whether or not they will be evaluated.

The fact that evaluation findings have to compete for attention and the inherently political nature of evaluation itself has implications for acceptability and utilisation of findings.

OVERCOMING THE BARRIERS

A commonly accepted definition among evaluators as to what counts as benefits is needed to minimise methodological problems. Also, a strong commitment by governments to setting up RBM&E systems with sufficient funding and expertise is essential. Regarding objectives, it is important to identify key enduring and overarching programme objectives and indicators against which programme effectiveness and efficiency will be measured beforehand. Granted that evaluation is inherently political it is, nevertheless, accepted that fulfilling the interests of citizens, rather than using evaluation to score political points is, and must remain, the overriding aim of both government and opposition. Evaluation is the sieve with which to separate working from non-working governmental programmes. As such, it needs to be taken seriously. Playing politics with evaluation findings is not in the public interest.

CONCLUSION

The significance of measuring programme effectiveness and efficiency cannot be underestimated. Implementing of programmes is not an end in itself. Governments have to produce tangible results showing programme effectiveness and efficiency. Consequently, monitoring alone is insufficient. Measuring programme effectiveness by ascertaining their impacts and benefits is critical. Efficiency measurement is also essential since budgetary constraints are real and achieving the greatest benefits at the least cost makes more than just economic sense. By coupling implementation and results assessment, RBM&E provides an invaluable tool for governments to improve results achievement. However, many governments in Africa in particular do not have effective evaluation systems, if any at all. Institutionalisation of evaluation in the European Union and the United States explains mainly positive programmatic results as vital lessons are learnt. African and other developing countries have much to learn from their own and others' successful and failed programmes. Randomised experimental, quasi-experimental and implicit designs are typically used in outcome, summative or impact evaluations, but with different degrees of certainty regarding causal inferences. A number of challenges constrain measurement of programme effectiveness and efficiency, including methodological, financial, governmental, political and public service barriers.

REFERENCES

- Alberta, Treasury Department. 1996. *Measuring performance: a reference guide*. Edmonton.
- Behn, R.D. 1995. The big questions of public management. *Public Administration Review*, 55(4):313–324.
- Behn, R.D. 2003. Why measure performance? Different purposes require different measures. *Public Administration Review*, 63(5):586–606.



- Boyle, R. and Lemaire, D. (eds). 1999. *Building effective evaluation capacity: lessons from practice*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.
- Furubo, J-E., Rist, R.C. and Sandahl, R. (eds). 2002. *International atlas of evaluation*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.
- Halachmi, A. 2002a. Performance measurement, accountability, and improved performance. *Public Performance and Management Review*, 25(4):370–374.
- Halachmi, A. 2002b. Performance management and government productivity. *Work Study*, 51(2):63–73.
- Halachmi, A. 2002c. Performance measurement: a look at some possible dysfunctions. *Work Study*, 51(5):230–239.
- Halachmi, A. 2005. Performance measurement is only one way of managing performance. *International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management*, 54(7):502–516.
- Hatry, H.P. 2005. Results matter: suggestions for a developing country's early outcome measurement effort. In Shah, A. (ed.). 2005. *Public services delivery*. Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 85–115.
- Hatry, H.P. 1980. Performance Measurement principles and techniques: an overview for local government. *Public Productivity Review*, 4(4):312–339.
- Institute of Public Administration Canada. Performance measurement. Leadership matters topical briefs. <http://www.ipac.ca/documents/WBi-PerformanceMeasurement.pdf>. [30 September 2009]
- Johnsen, Å. and Vakkuri, J. 2006. Is there a Nordic perspective on public sector performance measurement? *Financial accountability & Management*, 22(3):291–308.
- Julnes, P.d.L. and Holzer, M. 2001. Promoting the utilisation of performance measures in public organizations: an empirical study of factors affecting adoption and implementation. *Public Administration Review*, 61:693–708. November – December.
- Kusek, J.Z. and Rist, R.C. 2004. *Ten steps to a results-based monitoring and evaluation system*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- Kusek, J.Z. and Rist, R.C. 2001. Building a performance-based monitoring and evaluation system: the challenges facing developing countries. *Evaluation Journal of Australasia*, 1(2):14–23.
- Lebas, M.J. 1995. Performance measurement and performance management. *International Journal of Production Economics*, 41:23–35.
- Maynard, J. and Zapico-Göni, E. 1997. *Monitoring performance in the public sector*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.
- Mayne, J. 1997. Accountability for program performance: a key to effective performance monitoring and reporting. In Mayne, J. and Zapico-Göni, E. (eds). *Monitoring performance in the public sector*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 157–173.
- Nachmias, D. 1979. *Public policy evaluation: approaches and methods*. New York, NY: St Martin's Press.
- Osborne, D. and Gaebler, T. 1992. *Reinventing government*. Boston, Mass.: Addison-Wesley.
- Palumbo, D.J. 1987. Politics and evaluation. In Palumbo, D.J. (ed.). 1987. *The politics of program evaluation*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 12–46.
- Roberts, A. 2005. Issues associated with the implementation of government wide performance monitoring. In Shah, A. (ed.). 2005. *Public services delivery*. Washington, DC: The World Bank, 1–38.
- Rossi, P.H., Freeman, H.E. and Lipsey, M.W. 1999. *Evaluation: a systematic approach*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Royle, D., Thyer, B.A., Padgett, D.K. and Logan, T.K. 2001. *Program evaluation: an introduction*. 3rd ed. Toronto: Brooks/Cole Thomson Learning.
- Rutman, L. and Mowbray, G. 1983. *Understanding program evaluation*. Beverley Hills, CA: Sage.

- Shah, A. 2005. Overview. In Shah, A. (ed.). 2005. *Public services delivery*. Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, xxiii-xxxviii.
- South Africa. 2009. Green Paper: improving government performance: our approach. The Presidency: Pretoria.
- Thompson, M. 1980. *Benefit-cost analysis for program evaluation*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Thoenig, J.C. 2003. Learning from evaluation practice: the case of public sector reforms. In Wollmann, H. (ed.). 2003. *Evaluation in public sector reforms: concepts and practices in international perspective*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar. 209–230.
- Treasury Board of Canada, Secretariat. Program evaluation methods: measurement and attribution of program results. Third edition. http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/eval/pubs/meth/pem-mep_e.pdf [5 October 2009]
- Weiss, C.1987. Where politics and evaluation research meet. In Palumbo, D.J. (ed.). 1987. *The politics of program evaluation*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 47–70.
- Weiss, C. 1983. Evaluation research in the political context. In Struening, E.L. and Brewer, M.B. (eds). 1983. *Handbook of evaluation research*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage. 31-45.
- Wholey, J.S. 1997. Trends in performance measurement: challenges for evaluators. In Chelimsky, E. and Shadish, W.R. (eds). 1997. *Evaluation for the 21st century*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 124–133.
- Wholey, J.S., Newcomer, K.E. and Associates. 1989. Improving government performance: evaluation strategies for strengthening public agencies and programs. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- World Bank. 1997. *World Development Report 1997: the state in a changing world*. New York, NY: Oxford.