

Monitoring and Evaluation: A Practical Approach to Public Service Delivery

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Abstract

This paper monitoring and evaluation: a practical approach to public service delivery investigates the role of monitoring and evaluation in public service delivery. The primary responsibility of the government is to do for the people that which the people cannot do for themselves. It therefore, behoves on the public sector to provide the catalyst for affordable and quality services to the citizens. It was observed that basic necessities of life such as food, shelter, education, power, health, water supply, peace and security are lacking or short in supply in Nigeria. The non availability or inadequate provision of these basic needs of life is attributed to poor service delivery. The high level of poor service delivery in Nigeria is as a result of weak or lack of monitoring and evaluation system. The paper therefore argued that monitoring and evaluation are sine qua non for public service delivery. As a matter of fact every government project or programme should be adequately monitored and evaluated to track the development of the project in line with the stated goal or objective. In essence, monitoring and evaluation strengthens the management of government activities, supports accountability relationships within civil society and service delivery.

Key words: Accountability; Evaluation; Monitoring; Public service and Service delivery

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Introduction

The hallmark of public administration is efficiency and effectiveness. Efficiency has to do with the state or quality of being efficient. It has to do with the ability to accomplish something with the least waste of time and effort with minimum resources. It entails competency in duty or performance. Effectiveness has to do with the ability to carry out responsibility successfully. It is the degree to which something is successful in producing a desired result or outcome. The business of every government is conducted by public administrator. Thus, public administration is government in action. They exhibit efficiency and effectiveness in their task through accomplishment of or ability to accomplish a job with a minimum expenditure of time and effort

In the words of Banton (2020), efficiency signifies a peak level of performance that uses the least amount of inputs to achieve the highest amount of output. Efficiency requires reducing the number of unnecessary resources used to produce a given output including personal time and energy. It is a measurable concept that can be determined using the ratio of useful output to total input. It minimizes the waste of resources such as physical materials, energy, and time while accomplishing the desired output.

It is imperative to note that public services are services provided by a government to its citizens and non citizens that are resident in the state. Basic services like water, health care, education, transport, security etc. are considered essential for human survival and hence constitute a fundamental human right. The effective delivery of such services is crucial for wellbeing of the people and development goals. There is an argument on service delivery which states that, in order to have effective public

service delivery, it is not enough to concentrate only on “supply side mechanisms”. There is also a need to look at the “demand side” of service delivery by ensuring that the users of public services are informed of their rights and entitlements and are enabled to exercise their rights by monitoring the quality of public services and holding the government and service providers concerned accountable. Public services can either be provided by the state directly, or through sub-contracted private service providers. Monitoring and evaluation are integral and individually distinct parts of preparation and implementation of public programmes and policies. They are critical tools that are strategically positioned for sound management and achievement of organizational goals. Monitoring and evaluation are crucial aspects of running any organisation, but are particularly important when delivering services to the people.

Hlatshwayo & Govender (2015:96) noted that when the Government Wide Monitoring and Evaluation Framework was adopted, it was praised for its radical attempts to bolster good governance, improve accountability and expedite transformation, as well as transform public sector management, support programme implementation and increase service delivery. The framework introduced a more centralized, transparent, participatory and collaborative framework to monitor and evaluate government activities. In the main, the positive support was in response to many years of lack of transformation, rampant corruption, disaffected public servants and poor service delivery, leading to public protest and civil disobedience. As a result, the framework was welcomed as a panacea to the many challenges besetting ministerial performance, government, line departments, state institutions and public enterprises. However, though the framework was welcomed by many stakeholders, the framework has over the years experienced both conceptual challenges and practical hindrances, as a result of weak institutional and structural arrangement, lack of skills, limited capacity, poor knowledge and information management

The main objective of the public sector is to provide and serve as catalyst for affordable and quality service delivery to the citizens. Basic needs of life such as food, shelter, education, power and energy, health and water supply, but above all, peace and security are needed to live a decent and productive life by the people. This cannot be possible without the provision/delivery of services that are capable of ensuring and enhancing human security and welfare by government (Darma & Ali 2014).

In Nigerian, the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework was established to track progress in the implementation of the first National Implementation Plan of 2010-2013 to ensure high performance and accountability. The Monitoring and evaluation framework also includes a Performance Contract between the President and the Ministers/Heads of agencies, which is cascaded down the Ministries and Agencies. The Monitoring and evaluation system is relatively strong at the national level but much weaker at the state and local government levels, and some other sectors. In Nigeria, the business of the government is seen as no body’s business. This manifested itself in the level of abandoned government projects, corruption, nepotism, favouritism etc. that had overwhelmed the country. Therefore, this paper explores the important of employing monitoring and evaluation technique as the sure way for service delivery by public administrators. To do this we will first look at the meaning of the major concepts in the paper.

Conceptual explanation

The meaning of monitoring

Business dictionary defines monitoring as supervising activities in progress to ensure they are on-course and on-schedule in meeting the objectives and performance targets. Monitoring is the

collection and analysis of information about a project or programme, undertaken while the project/programme is ongoing (Hobson, K; Mayne, R; Hamilton, J. 2013).

UNICEF (2003) noted that there are two kinds of Monitoring: situation monitoring and performance monitoring

1. Situation monitoring: It measures change in a condition or a set of conditions or lack of change. Monitoring the situation of children and women is necessary when trying to draw conclusions about the impact of programmes or policies on them. It also includes monitoring of the wider context, such as early warning monitoring, or monitoring of socio-economic trends and the country's wider policy, economic or institutional context.
2. Performance monitoring: It measures progress in achieving specific objectives and results in relation to an implementation plan whether for programmes, projects, strategies, and activities.

Solomon & Young (2007) argued that monitoring provides the background for reducing schedule and budget cost overruns, while ensuring that the required quality standards are achieved in project implementation. Monitoring is a continuous function that uses the 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 (World Bank 2004).

The Concept of Evaluation

Evaluation has to do with the systematic and objective examination concerning the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and impact of activities in the light of specified objectives. The idea in evaluating projects is to isolate errors in order to avoid repeating them and to underline and promote the successful mechanisms for current and future projects (Wikipedia). Evaluation is the periodic, retrospective assessment of an organization, project or programme that might be conducted internally or by external independent evaluators (Hobson, K; Mayne, R; Hamilton, J. 2013). It is the systematic and objective assessment of an on-going or completed project, program, or policy, including its design, implementation, and results. The aim is to determine the relevance and fulfillment of objectives, development efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability. An evaluation should provide information that is credible and useful, enabling the in-corporation of lessons learned into the decision making process of both recipients and donors (World Bank 2004).

Evaluation attempts to determine as systematically and objectively as possible the worth or significance of an intervention, strategy or policy. The appraisal of worth or significance is guided by key criteria discussed below. Evaluation findings should be credible, and be able to influence decision-making by programme partners on the basis of lessons learned. For the evaluation process to be 'objective', it needs to achieve a balanced analysis, recognize bias and reconcile perspectives of different stakeholders (including intended beneficiaries) through the use of different sources and methods (UNICEF 2003)

Solomon & Young (2007) noted that evaluation can be understood as "an instrument for helping planners and project developers to assess to what extent the projects have achieved the desired objectives set forth in the project documents". Again, evaluation can be defined as an assessment, as systematic and objective as possible, of a planned, ongoing, or completed intervention. The aim is to determine the relevance of objectives, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability so as to incorporate lessons learned into the decision making process. Specifically, this kind of evaluation addresses:

“why” questions, that is, what caused the changes being monitored; “how” questions, or what was the sequence or process that led to successful (or unsuccessful) outcomes; and “compliance and accountability” questions, that is, did the promised activities actually take place and as planned? (Kusek & Rist World Bank 2004). From all the definitions above one can deduce that evaluation is an assessment of ongoing or completed project to determine the effectiveness and efficiency of the project in line with the stated objective.

The Concept of Service delivery

Effective service delivery involves a clear understanding of the specific services an organization provides, and its target customers. Understanding the service characteristics enhances how their customers see the services an organization provides. According to Nash & Nash (2004 cited by majekodunmi 2012) effective service delivery is the provision of services to a buyer in such a way the buyer's expectations can be met or exceeded while, at the same time, the business remains viable. Effective service delivery is rendering services that correspond to the customers' desires, needs and expectations. This concept emanates from the perceived need to treat members of the public that require government services in such a manner private-sector entrepreneur would treat his or her customers.

SIGMA (1999:33) argued that service delivery may be defined broadly as all contacts with the public administration during which customers (citizens, residents and enterprises) seek data, handle their affairs or pay taxes, or are involved in a transactional relationship with the state at their own initiative. In this context, orientation towards customers needs to be understood as encompassing all such contacts and all tasks performed by the public administration that affect enterprises and individuals. This broad definition encompasses not only contacts between the central public administration and customers but also the rules regulating those contacts, i.e. the administrative procedures. Important to note that, one of the main responsibilities of public administration is to handle the affairs of enterprises and individuals and deliver services effectively and efficiently. Effectiveness of service cannot be measured solely against existing legal provisions as it focuses to a great extent on fulfilling customer expectations while respecting legal provisions. Yet effectiveness also entails ensuring equal access to public administration services and the efficient provision of these services, thus saving all the parties involved both money and time. Service delivery has to do with efficient and effective implementation of policies or programme of an organization to the utmost satisfaction of its customers or the citizens. Service delivery is more complex in the public sector as it is not just about meeting expressed needs, but finding out the needs that are not expressed, setting priorities, resource allocation and publicly justifying and accounting for what has been done (Gowan, Seymour, J., Ibarreche, S. & Lackey, 2001).

The Role of Monitoring and Evaluation in Public Service Delivery

The role of monitoring and evaluation in public service delivery cannot be over emphasized. This is because of the fact that a critical follow up of any project or programme will automatically lead to logical conclusion and achievement of the stated goal or objective. Stakeholders at times deem it wise to engage or participate in monitoring and evaluation of public projects for better service delivery. Therefore, Participatory monitoring & evaluation (PM&E) is a process through which stakeholders at various levels engage in monitoring or evaluating a particular project, program or policy, share control over the content, the process and the results of the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) activity and engage in taking or identifying corrective actions. Participatory monitoring & evaluation focuses on the active engagement of primary stakeholders (WORLD BANK 2010a). Participative monitoring and evaluation has to do with active involvement or engagement of

stakeholders in assessment of the progress of a project or programme to ensure that it conforms with the set standard or quality to its logical conclusion. The major work of the stakeholders here is to make sure that the project is executed in line with the standard set for the satisfaction of the people. In South Africa (SA), for instance, the government's National Development Plan (NDP) emphasizes the role of monitoring and evaluation in meeting its strategic and developmental objectives, poverty reduction, budget decision making and project implementation processes (National Development Plan, 2012). In essence, monitoring and evaluation strengthens the management of government activities within ministries and in local governments, and supports accountability relationships within civil society. With poor service delivery and rampant corruption in the (SA) public sector, monitoring and evaluation supports transparency and builds a performance culture to support better management and policymaking, including the budgeting process (Mosse and Lewis, 2005 in Hlatshwayo & Govender 2015:92).

According to Kambuwa and Wallis (2002 in Hlatshwayo & Govender 2015:92) in South Africa (SA) there is a growing gap between good policies of government departments and project implementation results. As such, it is important to follow participatory implementation and institutionalize processes for greater accountability, since it provides a vital evaluative link between policy development and project implementation. Thus, monitoring and evaluation provides an evidence base for public budget, resource allocation decisions and identifies mistakes and replicates success.

Table 1: 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 sets 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

Source: Kusek & Rist (2004)

Monitoring and evaluation can and should be evident throughout the life cycle of a project, program, or policy, as well as after completion. Monitoring and evaluation with its continuing streams of data and feedback has to a great extent added value at every stage from design through implementation and impact. The specific information will also be different at each level, the complexity of collecting data will be different, the political sensitivity on collecting the data may change, and the uses of the information may change from one level to another (Kusek and Rist 2001:17 in Kusek & Rist 2004).

Functioning monitoring and evaluation system to a great extent provides a continuous flow of information that is useful both internally and externally. The internal uses of monitoring and evaluation come into play as the information from the monitoring and evaluation system is used as a crucial management tool for the public sector manager in achieving results and meeting specific targets. Hence, Information on progress, performance and problems are all important to a public manager striving to achieve results. Externally, the information from monitoring and evaluation

system is important to those outside the public sector who are expecting results, wanting to see demonstrable impacts from government action, and hoping to build trust in a government that is striving to better the life of its citizens. This provides satisfaction to tax payer having observed the utilization of their monies (tax) by the government for their own very good.

Results based monitoring and evaluation system provides feedback on the actual outcomes and goals of government actions. Results based monitoring and evaluation systems help answer the following questions:

- What are the goals of the organization?
- Are the goals being achieved?
- How can achievement of the goals be proven?

Monitoring and evaluation strategy can be used to diminish fear within organizations and governments, and can instead devise ways of instilling an open atmosphere in which people can learn from mistakes, make improvements, and create knowledge along the way. It therefore, provides the following

1. Knowledge Capital: Good monitoring and evaluation systems are source of knowledge capital. They enable governments and organizations to develop a knowledge base of the types of projects, programs, and policies that are successful. It is generally interested in “what works, what does not work, and why didn’t it work”.
2. Transparency and Accountability: Monitoring and evaluation systems aid in promoting and sustaining transparency and accountability within organizations and governments. External and internal stakeholders will have a clearer picture of the status of projects, programs, and policies. Also the ability to demonstrate positive results can help in getting greater political and popular support by the government.
3. Report and Findings: The uses of monitoring and evaluation findings or reports can play many significant roles, and the information produced can be put to very different uses. This includes

-To demonstrate accountability delivering on political promises made to citizenry and other stakeholders

-To convince stakeholders and citizens using evidence from findings

-To help organizational learning through understanding of the report of the findings

-To explore and investigate having seeing what works, what does not work and why

-To document recording and creating an institutional memory for future purposes

-To involve stakeholders through a participatory process etc (Worthen, Sanders, and Fitzpatrick 1997 in Kusek & Rist 2004).

4. Transformation: Monitoring and evaluation has the capacity to transform government departments and the public sector into a functional system that is participatory and representative (UNDP, 2013). The Operations Evaluation Department (OED) of the World Bank has thus undertaken numerous initiatives to support developing countries to strengthen their Monitoring and Evaluation capacities and skills, as integral to achieving good governance, public sector transformation and service delivery (UNDP, 2013).

Igbokwe-Ibeto, contended that the process of managing a project requires monitoring and evaluation. These exercises are integral parts of a project cycle and are important for ensuring that due process, standardization and adherence to project specification are followed. Monitoring is a periodic oversight function in the implementation of a project that needs to be followed closely for a project

to be fully realized. Nigeria monitoring and evaluation system like other African countries faces peculiar challenges.

The Challenges to Monitoring and Evaluation of Projects or Programmes

ADB & World Bank listed many important obstacles to institutionalizing evaluation systems in developing countries, among them to include: poor demand for Monitoring and evaluation information and lack of ownership by decision makers and senior public managers of the idea and system, shortage of evaluation skills and a chasm between mechanisms for evaluation feedback and the actual decision making processes and compromised sustainability, largely owing to insufficient resource commitment (Malaolu & Ogbuabor 2017).

The following have been identified to pose a challenge to successful monitoring and evaluation of project or programme.

1. **Uncoordinated Project Implementation:** it is imperative to note that implementing too many projects at the same time as a result of lack of proper prioritization has to a great extent been identified as a significant factor which can affect successful project monitoring and evaluation.
2. **Political Instability:** Constant change of government, transfer and redeployment of workers who are involved in project monitoring affect the processes and the realization of the objective of the project concerned.
3. **Social Instability:** Factors such as, communal crises, ethnic clashes, religious bigotry, farmer/headers clashes etc. hinders the smooth monitoring and evaluation of projects or programmes cited in the affected area.
4. **Political Interference:** The political executives do interfere in the project or programme monitoring and evaluation process. The simple fact is that because the executive are interested in the project for one reason or the other, he indirectly influences their actions. Thus, the incumbent government doesn't give the monitors and evaluators all the free hand.
5. **Corruption:** Some of the personnel's that are involved in the activity of monitoring and evaluation are corrupt. They do collect bribe or gratification from contractors and write report that the project has been completed while it has not.
6. **Poor Security:** the issue of security challenges facing the nation is a serious threat to monitoring and evaluation activity. At times, some of the workers are afraid of going to work in some particular areas or locality because of insecurity in that area.
7. **Poor Information:** Lack or inadequate knowledge of project life cycle affects its smooth monitoring and evaluation. A project monitoring and evaluation understanding of project life cycle, will determine how he/she handles a project in line with different stages of the project.

Conclusion

Public administration is government in action. It is a strategic objective in modernization of governance. Therefore, developing good public administration requires political commitment, vision, strategy, defining of priorities and the right actions. This action, should be designed, delivered and constantly re-designed around the evolving needs of the people, rather than for the convenience of the administration. It is also very important that the public administration's approach to service delivery is coherent, effective and efficient. Sound administrative procedures should be applied through the application of monitoring and evaluation system.

It is imperative to note that any project that is not properly monitored and evaluated will definitely result into project failure. Project is considered to be successfully monitored and evaluated if it is

completed on schedule (time effective), in line with the budget (monetary effective), achieves all the goals set for it, accepted and used by the people for whom the project is intended (customer satisfaction/goal achievement). “Time effective; Monetary effective and Customer satisfaction”.

The provision of public services in the country is the primary responsibility of the government, with assistant of the private sector in some area. The financing of projects for the provision of these services such as health, water, agriculture, education, sanitation, power, housing, justice, security etc. is usually carried out through annual government budgetary provisions or through the aid of international agency. Therefore, the actualization or realization of the objective of any project or programme to a large extent depends on the application of monitoring and evaluation system which is the catalyst for service delivery. Thus, proper monitoring and evaluation is a sine-qua-non for service delivery

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