



The role of VOPEs in influencing an enabling environment for evaluation

A South African Experience

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VOLUNTARISM, CONSOLIDATION, COLLABORATION & GROWTH – SAMEA AS VOPE



SAMEA - PHASES AND GROWTH

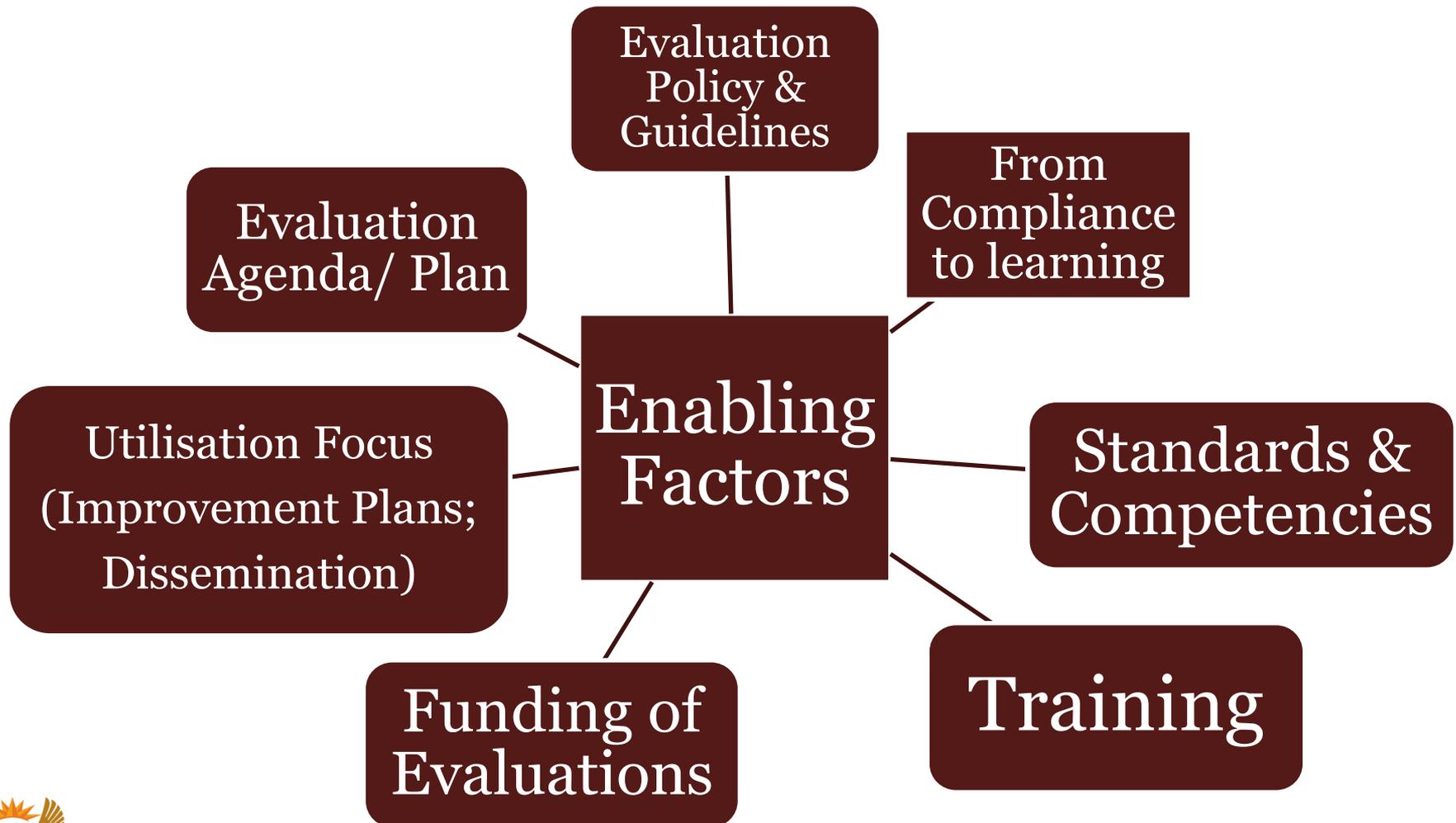
- Incubation [1970-94], establishment [1995-2007], consolidation [2007-12]
- Founders [Bisgard, Ofir, Kelly] and protocols [Board; voluntary, expenses]
- 2010 DPME Creation in Presidency as champion for M&E (now approx 200 posts, US\$20 million budget)

STRATEGY AND IMPLEMENTATION

Strengthening an Enabling Environment for evaluation (SAMEA)

- Through its strategic goals: advocacy for M&E nationally; provide a platform for M&E debate; promote professional standards; capacity building
 - SAMEA is one of several initiatives strengthening an enabling environment:
 - Universities: Clear [Wits], Crest [Stellenbosch], university M&E courses leading to post graduate degrees
 - Independents/consultancies: supply scarce evaluation skills
- Other players: foundations, AG, Treasury, PALAMA

Key Enabling Factors for Evaluation (DPME)



Key enabling factors (DPME)

- **National Evaluation Policy Framework** aims at **institutionalising evaluation system** across Government, to ensure **common language** and **conceptual base** for evaluation; improve **quality** of evaluations and ultimately, **utilisation** of evaluation finding to improve performance.
- **National Plan** identifies minimum **evaluations based on National Priorities** to be undertaken. 2012/13 plan approved with **8 evaluations** & 2013/14 approved with **15 priority evaluations**
- Draft **standards for evaluations developed, and competences** for programme staff commissioning evaluations, government M&E staff managing evaluations, and evaluators.
- **Training course for government staff** managing evaluations have been developed (using these competencies) and piloted 17-21 September 2012
- **Guidelines** : 4 evaluation guidelines approved. Plan in place for developing guidelines on 6 types of evaluations
- The methodology for Improvement Plans piloted.
- **Evaluation and Research Unit, established at the DPME** – currently consists of 7 members. It is responsible for setting up the evaluation system, providing technical support to departments on evaluations and oversees the evaluation system.



Key Enabling Factors (SAMEA)

- Willingness to debate, support new thinking, and decide [eg: key notes, fee collection, Conference theme]
- Protect balance sheet: 2 principles:
 - [i] match disbursements with income,
 - [ii] annually, the old Board present new Board with strengthened financial position



NATIONAL EVALUATION CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT, COUNTRY-LED EVALUATION SYSTEM AIMED A MOVING FROM POLICIES TO RESULTS OR OUTCOMES, AND SAMEA

*Segone's (2007: 31-2) capacity development framework addressing the demand as well as the supply side of evaluation, provides a valuable tool for classifying SA as country led system.

We suggest it aspires to avoid the classification “vicious circle country” where evidence provided government is “technically weak and policy-makers have little capacity to make use of it”, and like most , aspires to be classified as “virtuous circle country”, where evidence provided is “technically robust and is being used increasingly for decision-making”.

For debate is whether it can be classified as: “evidence supply–constrained country” where evidence is technically weak, reduces the quality of decision-making and therefore the quality of services delivered, but is increasingly demanded by policy-makers who resent being held to account on the basis of inadequate evidence.

Or, “evidence demand-constrained country”, where the improved quality and quantity of evidence is not demanded because policy-makers lack the incentives and/or the capacity to use it.

Debate in SAMEA has turned to the issue of thinking M&E systemically, this classification assisting the Board, as well as 2 metaphors.

METAPHORS GUIDING THINKING EVALUATION SYSTEMICALLY IN SA

- * “pincer” and “diminishing circles” (King Shaka, Zululand, SA)
- * the ancient chronicler’s account of Daniel (Patton, CES St Johns, Canada)

Evaluation environment in SA: needs both,

- *research oriented evaluation; force majeure; base of pincer; mainstream
- *framework oriented evaluation; expands evaluation; tip of horn; increases the reach of evaluation; the ideal in a system – evaluatees self-evaluate, refine, strengthen and improve (Fetterman).
- *avoid re-inventing the wheel – indigenize M&E (Wehipihana, New Zealand)

STRENGTHENING EQUITY-FOCUSSED AND GENDER-SENSITIVE EVALUATION SYSTEMS AND EVALUATIONS

*SAMEA actively advocates for evaluation being sensitive to ‘local perturbations and effects’ and for explicit values guiding evaluation – improvement, community ownership, inclusion, democratic participation, evidence-based strategies, social justice, capacity-building, accountability [of 10], and for empowerment as explicit aim. That is, values which cohere within a well conceptualized and tested framework [Fetterman 2001, 2005, 2012).

*In doing so, it actively advocates for ‘evaluatee self-evaluation’ facilitated by an external evaluation specialist.

*And it has seen this as continuous theme in its strengthening the evaluation environment in SA.

STRENGTHENING A SUSTAINABLE STRATEGY TO ENHANCE INDIVIDUAL CAPACITIES TO CONDUCT CREDIBLE EVALUATIONS

- *SAMEA's mandate: bi-annual Conference; capacity-building workshop series
- *strengthened through Conference Proceedings: state of evaluation in SA
- *strengthened through innovation: side-by-side in parallel Virtual Symposium, Conference 2011 [Wpeg]; hyperlinks to a repository of references to evaluation research shaping the field
 - e-texts on programme evaluation methodology
 - premised on substantive issues demanded for capacity building
- *strengthened through collaboration: with national and provincial government, foundations, independents, to establish M&E Chapters in provinces promoting evaluation demand, capacity building workshops developing individuals to conduct credible evaluations

BOTTLENECKS AND CHALLENGES

- *Board member time and overload
- *establishing a steady income stream: principles [recoup disbursements; hand over to new Board improved balance sheet]
- *physical space to house SAMEA

DPME Partnership with SAMEA

DPME has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with SAMEA to collaborate in promoting M&E in South Africa. Rationale for this for entering into this partnerships was the following:

1. Broad and **diverse membership of SAMEA** (includes NGOs/ VOPEs, etc) has several benefits for DPME including access to the broader stakeholders/ community of practice ;
2. Needed an **independent critical friend and adviser** to comment on these Government products;
3. Needed to promote **sharing of knowledge & best practices** (creating M&E learning network/platform in South Africa).

Areas of Cooperation

1. Co-organising capacity building and learning activities;
2. Dissemination around M&E - helping each other reach a wider group of M&E Practitioners.
3. Collaborating on evaluation standards and competencies;
4. Working towards professionalising evaluation in South Africa;
5. To encourage citizen participation and reporting.



Progress and Results to date

Policy-making

- On 30 September 2011 SAMEA organised a working session to comment on the then draft National Evaluation Policy Framework, later approved by Cabinet on 13 November 2011

Evaluation Workshop and launch of an M&E Association in KwaZulu-Natal Province

- A successful evaluation workshop, jointly organised by both organisations was held from 25-27 September 2012, which coincided with the launch of Provincial M&E Association.

Standards and Competencies for Evaluation in Government

- A Series of consultative workshops on draft Standards and Competencies for Evaluation in Government developed by DPME are underway, targeting SAMEA members in 4 Provinces (States) – one successful workshop already taken place on 23 November 2012 – very useful inputs)

Face-to-face Board meetings

- Significantly strengthened Board decisions
- Developed a Plan of Action.



INNOVATIONS GOING FORWARD AND LESSONS LEARNT

- Legotla' or meeting where the Board can discuss substantive issues in M&E
- Conference Panels: -DGs use as platform for reporting and critical comment citizenry
- Conference paper strings: in Additional Mathematics, rigor, preparing quality students studying Engineering, back-end implication of innovation

Next Steps

- Build strong collaborative partnerships
- Strengthen income stream to remain an independent M&E player nationally: voluntarism vs a growing Secretariat (SAMEA)
- Increase membership pool: individual, Institutional
- Development of a 3 year DPME-SAMEA Strategic Plan is underway to concretise the Memorandum of Understanding;
- Consultative workshops on draft framework to strengthen the participation of citizens in service delivery monitoring, i.e. Citizens Based Monitoring (CBM);
- SAMEA reflecting on evaluation standards and competencies for Government and exploring a possibility of widening them or adopting them;
- Professionalising evaluation;
- Joint newsletter depicting findings of key evaluations, case studies and best practices.



THANK YOU!

