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*Excellence in Public Administration & Community Service*

**Department of Public Administration**  
**(DPA)**

**Faculty of Management and Commerce**

**An analysis of the design of evaluation standards in the South African  
National Evaluation System**

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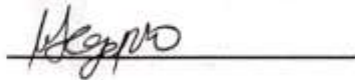
Dissertation presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Administration in Public Admin. (by Research) in the Faculty of  
Management and Commerce at Fort Hare University

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## DECLARATION

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I Morakane Jacobeth Segopolo declare that this research report entitled 'An analysis of the design of evaluation standards in the South African National Evaluation System' is my own unaided work, and has never been submitted by me at another university or any other institution. I am hereby submitting it in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Administration in Public Admin by Research, in the University of the Fort Hare.



MJ SEGOPOLO

March 2022

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## ABSTRACT

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Globally, the development of evaluation standards and related quality assurance measures for managing and assessing evaluation quality has been the focus of much debate in the evaluation community. Especially in the current context of COVID 19, validating the quality of evaluation and research evidence to respond to the global pandemic and to socio-economic development has become more relevant.

The question of evaluation quality has also become important in South Africa. This has resulted in a need for a National Evaluation System to manage the quality of the evaluation process and outputs; so that critical stakeholders can trust and use the evaluation evidence to measure performance and accountability of government.

The South African National Evaluation System through the National Evaluation Policy Framework (NEPF) was adopted by Cabinet to guide the development and management of systemic and institutional evaluation policy and practice. This research responds to the conceptual gap in the design of the evaluation standards. The purpose of the research study is to analyse the design of evaluation standards in the South African National Evaluation System (NES). The research objectives of the study were:

- To analyse the **design** of evaluation standard in the South African National Evaluation System against international evaluation normative frameworks,
- To assess the **theory** underpinning the evaluation standards in the South African National Evaluation System.

A qualitative research approach using a semi-structured interview was used to collect data from the eight respondents. The participants included in the sample were those who played a meaningful role in the design and application of the evaluation standards and the Evaluation Quality Assessment Tool (EQAT) of the NES. Content and thematic analysis were used to process and analyse the empirical data.

The research study produced the following key findings. The design of the national evaluation standards as a component of the South African National Evaluation System was technically and conceptually clear about its context, rationale, purpose and its claims to manage the evaluation process to promote evaluation quality. Although most national evaluation standards of the NES were consistent with international frameworks, both national and international

standards did not adequately address the development and transformative issues such as equity, diversity and inclusion. Finally, the discourse of paradigms was absent in the design of the standards. The national evaluation standards did not explicitly show the influence of the paradigm on methodological approaches, evaluation designs and methods. This theoretical gap is also evident in most of the international frameworks that the national standards were benchmarked against.

**Key words:** Evaluation standards, Evaluation Quality Assessment Tool, National Evaluation System, Evaluation criteria, Paradigms.



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# CHAPTER 1


## INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

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### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will firstly set the background and context of the research study by describing the development of the South African National Evaluation System (NES). Secondly, the chapter will define the problem statement, purpose and research questions; and thirdly the chapter will explain the delimitations of the research and justification of the research. The chapter will conclude with the layout of research study.

#### 1.1.1 Background and context of the study



In 2010 the Department of Planning Monitoring & Evaluation (DPME) was established by the South African cabinet for managing government performance and accountability. The establishment of a national evaluation system (NES,) as one of the key functions of DPME was facilitated with the approval of the National Evaluation Policy Framework (NEPF) by South African cabinet. One of the key components of the NES was the design and development of national evaluation standards to guide the management and conducting of evaluation within government. Although there have been many research reports on NES (Abrahams, 2015; Goldman *et al.*, 2015; Genesis Analytics report on evaluating South Africa's National Evaluation System, DPME, 2019), there has been insufficient critical assessment on the design of the evaluation standards. This research study responds to this conceptual gap by assessing the design of the evaluation standards.

#### 1.1.2 Brief introduction of the National Evaluation System

The National Evaluation Policy Framework (NEPF) was developed in 2011 to set up and implement the National Evaluation System as part of the Government Wide Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation System. The key role-players to drive the National Evaluation system include DPME at the national level, Offices of the Premiers and departments at the

provincial level, as well as M&E units in the departments. The NES is made up of the following key components; the evaluation standards, competencies and quality assessment system; evaluation guidelines and templates; evaluation courses to support departments; Management Information System (MIS) designed to track commissioned evaluations; evaluation reports sent to Cabinet for approval and then to respective Parliamentary Committees; improvement plans based on the recommendations; and a public repository to provide access to evaluation studies. In the context National Evaluation System, the national evaluation standards guideline is one of the key components of the system.

### **1.1.3 National Evaluation Standards**

The purpose of the evaluation standards was to set quality benchmarks for evaluation managers (also referred to as evaluation commissioners) and evaluators to guide the process of '*evaluation management*', '*evaluation conduct*' and '*evaluation utilisation*'. The National Evaluation standards guidelines described standards across four phases, which include – phase 1: planning, design and inception report standards; phase 2: conducting the evaluation standard; phase 3: reporting standards; and phase 4: follow-up, use and learning standards phase. These evaluation standards were translated into an assessment tool called the Evaluation Quality Assessment Tool (EQAT), which was applied to assess the quality of the evaluation process and the evaluation report. This research will examine the design of these evaluation standards in relation to planning, conducting, reporting and use of the evaluation.

## **1.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

Based on the observation of evidence from recent studies on the NES (DPME, 2017; Podems, 2018; Leslie et al., 2015; and Goldman, Deliwe, Taylor, Ishmail, Smith, Masangu, et al., 2019); and in my experience as an official in the DPME, the following challenges were identified in the design of the evaluation standards. The first challenge was that since the national evaluation standards were borrowed and appropriated from international agencies, the argument presented by Abrahams (2015) and Leslie et al., (2015) is that these were developed within a short period of time. This could have resulted in the lack of robustness on the design thereof, which the study seeks to explore. Secondly, due to the dominance of international frameworks in the design of the national evaluation standards as these standards were mostly influenced by OECD criteria, this approach was not context sensitive. The developed national evaluation standards did not adequately respond to the critical

developmental and transformative issues such as human rights, gender equity and social justice. Thirdly, the design of evaluation standards did not have clear theory of change to guide the planning and implementation of the standards. This was evident in lack of the number and levels of competence of evaluation managers and evaluators required to support the implementation of the NES by national and provincial government departments. Finally, the designers of the national evaluation standards failed to demonstrate how paradigmatic orientation and choices of evaluation by managers and evaluators may influence evaluation design and findings. This research is intended to investigate in more depth the design of the national evaluation standards in the National Evaluation System. The research assumes that the robustness in the design of the evaluation standards does have a positive influence on the quality and use of evaluation.

### 1.3 PURPOSE STATEMENT, RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS

The purpose of this research is to analyse the design of the evaluation standards of the National Evaluation System. This research study will respond to the two key research objectives described below:

- To analyse the **design** of evaluation standard in the South African National Evaluation System against international evaluation normative frameworks; and,
- To examine the **theory** that underpins the design of the evaluation standards in the South African National Evaluation System.

The above research objectives have been translated into the key research questions described below:

**Research question 1:** What is the context, rationale, purpose, assumptions and theory of change, key claims and limitations of the South African Evaluation Standards?

**Research question 2:** How does the design of the evaluation standard in the South African National Evaluation System match with international normative frameworks?

**Research question 3:** How does the design of the Evaluation Quality Assessment Tool align to the national evaluation standards?

**Research question 4:** What are the theoretical frameworks underpinning the design of the South African government evaluation standards?

#### **1.4 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This research study uses a qualitative method that included use of literature review, document review and interviews to collect data. The document review analysed the following documents: Guideline on Standards for Evaluation in Government: The Presidency (2014), National Evaluation Policy Framework (NEPF), DPME (2011); and the DPME Evaluation Guideline No 2.2.19: Guideline on Quality Assessment of Government Evaluations, DPME (2017). The interview adopted a purposive sample of key stakeholders who were involved in the design and application of the evaluation standard. Content and thematic analysis were used to process and analyse the empirical data. The research methodology will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3.

#### **1.5 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY**

The National Evaluation System plays a strategic role in providing evaluation evidence to decision makers to measure government performance and accountability. The findings of this study will guide the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation to review the design of the national evaluation standards. This will enable evaluation managers/ commissioners and evaluators to use a robust set of standards to guide and assess the evaluation process to produce quality evaluation reports that will be used by key stakeholders.

The evidence from literature review on discourse of the evaluation shows that there are challenges of poor quality of evaluation report as well as utilization (Podems, 2014; Goldman, et al., 2019). This research will investigate how the review on design of the evaluation standards can strengthen the NES. The findings from this study will also contribute to existing knowledge in the evaluation discourse to enable evaluators, researchers and policy-makers in South Africa and globally to expand the debate to enrich existing evaluation standards to promote evaluation quality and use.

## **1.6 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The study uses the qualitative method to examine the design of evaluation standards. The primary focus of the study is on the assessment of the design of South African national evaluation standards. The study does not include the assessment of evaluator competency frameworks nor standards for professionalization of evaluators. This research study will examine the design of the national evaluation standards in relation to planning the evaluation, conducting the evaluation, reporting on the evaluation, and using the evaluation report.

## **1.7 LAYOUT OF THE RESEARCH CHAPTERS**

### **1.7.1 Chapter 1: Introduction to the research**

This chapter introduces the study and outlines the background and context of the research study by describing the development of the South African National Evaluation System. Secondly, the chapter then defines the problem statement, purpose and research questions; and this is followed by the chapter explaining the delimitations of the research and justification of the research. The chapter will conclude with the layout of research study.



### **1.7.2 Chapter 2: Literature review**

Chapter 2 delineates in detail the role of standards in evaluation process generally and how these standards are understood in relation to improving the quality of evaluation report. Since the evaluation standards is one of the key pillars in defining professionalization of any discipline, the discussion on literature review further explores how evaluation standards are viewed in the context of professionalization of the evaluation practice. The chapter will then provide the theoretical framework behind the study by using and examining Vaca (2017) periodic table of evaluation concepts and assess how this model's concept inform the design of evaluation standards and the Evaluation Quality Assessment Tool. The chapter concludes by presenting the conceptual framework of the study.

### **1.7.3 Chapter 3: Research methodology**

This chapter describes the research methodology that was applied to collect and analyse data for this study. The justification for the use of a qualitative research method will be explained. The chapter will then discuss the data collection approach, including the reasons behind the choice of interviews informants. The chapter will also explain the methodological challenges experienced including the adaptation made by the researcher as a result of the Covid-19 virus which was declared a global pandemic. This will be explained in the context of the effect that the Lockdown Regulations related to the pandemic had on data collection of the study. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the limitation of the study.

### **1.7.4 Chapter 4: Analysis of findings**

The chapter focuses on the presentation on analysis of the findings on this study. This section of the study presents the analysis and key lessons as per research questions.

### **1.7.5 Chapter 5 Recommendations and Conclusion**

This section offers the reader recommendations including concluding remarks for future development and refinement on the NES evaluation standards, which also cover the components critical for this exercise.



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## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW AND THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

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#### **2. INTRODUCTION**

In the previous chapter, an overview of the entire study was described which included the context of the study, the motivation behind the study, key research questions, and the research scope. This chapter will firstly provide a review of literature; and secondly examine the theoretical framework for the study. Finally, the chapter will describe the conceptual framework for the study.

#### **2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW**

The review of literature will firstly describe the role of standards in evaluation; and secondly, examine the influence of global evaluation standards and approaches on the South African evaluations' standards. Thirdly the section will explore the articulation of 'new meaning and transformative nature' of Western models within African context and further describe key concepts that guide the design and application of the evaluation standards. The final section will briefly discuss evaluation standards in the context and discourse of professionalization of evaluation.

##### **2.1.1 The role of 'standards' in evaluation**

National evaluation standards play a critical role in providing minimum standards for managing, planning, conducting, reporting and using the evaluation. In order to create harmony among evaluators, commissioners and those directly or indirectly affected by evaluation, a deeper investigation into evaluation standards have become critical in guiding the evaluation discourse.



### 2.1.2 Global evaluation standards and approaches

This research study will examine the South African standards for evaluation in government (2014) against the following selected international evaluation standards and guidelines:

- OECD-DAC Quality Standards for Development Evaluation (2010) drawn from the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (JCSEE);
- ASEAN Regional Framework on Evaluation Standards (ARFES ,2015).
- African Evaluation Association (AfrEA, the African Evaluation Guidelines (2018);
- American Evaluation Association (AEA) Evaluators Ethical Guidelines (2018).

This study will examine (in section 4.2) to what extent the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) evaluation criteria influenced the design of global evaluation standards and approaches. The need to contextualise evaluation standards is an argument that has been embedded within these global frameworks, but poorly incorporate by those who adopt these global practices.



### 2.1.3 Articulation of ‘new meaning and transformative nature’ of Western models within African Context

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The use of international evaluation standards and approaches to design local evaluation standards have both merits and limitations. The merit in the adoption of foreign policies, practices, norms and ideas should be undertaken to promote learning and knowledge, without necessarily limiting nor stifling the ability to question the preconceived ideas and assumptions that fall within the cracks during implementation of such models. Stone (2012) cited by Adelle, Fioramonti and Mati (2017) argues that transnational networks are good for providing a significant mechanism through which ideas, norms and principles can take place. However, to contextualise borrowed concepts, Adelle, Fioramonti and Mati (2017) further highlight that this should encourage generating ‘new meaning’ and clarifications of the information conveyed on concepts borrowed.

The limitation of adopting western models may have unintended effect of designing and implementing policies and systems that are not context-sensitive to societal issues. It is on the same contestation that Cloete (2016) argues that international evaluation agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank, the International

Monetary Fund (IMF) and OECD have tended to focus on their interventions to African countries without embracing 'complex adaptive systems'. This model implies that independent agents interact and learn from each other in order to be resilient and adaptive to any disruptive and changing needs of the society (Sammut-Bonnici, 2015; Bamberger, Raimondo and Vaessen, 2015). Though this concept is mostly used in business market to enable agents to be agile and evolve, its principle applies to all spheres. It was intriguing to take note of the OECD (2021) publication which now seems to share similar observations and asserts that the OECD criteria needs to be contextualized, applied thoughtfully with understanding within the background of the individual evaluation and the intervention being evaluated.

The global dominance of Western evaluation approaches and principles, assumptions and practices to programme evaluation are increasingly being questioned in non-Western contexts. Dominance on evaluation practises has continually advance in a disproportionate manner (Cloete and Auriacombe, 2019). Evidence to this are practices and theories that are adopted by African institutions from Western countries without using these to reflect and reshape local and African evaluation context, and make these models relevant for national dilemmas and priorities (Mbava and Dahler-Larsen, 2019; Ofir and Kumar, 2013)

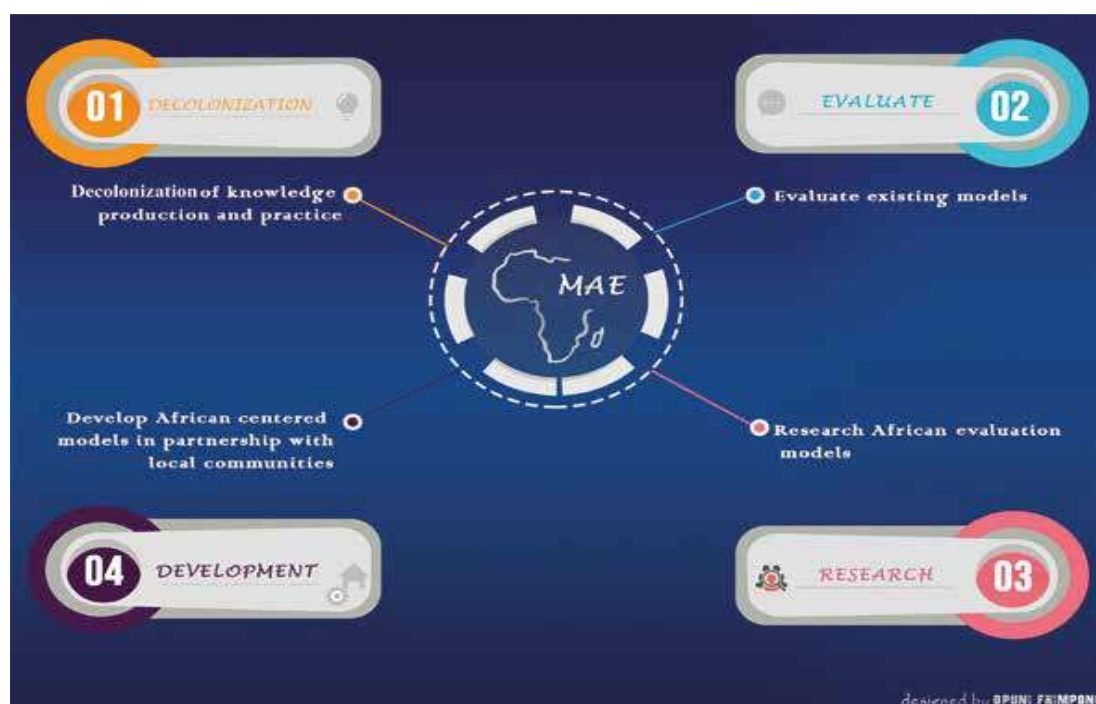


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Proponents of 'evaluation for transformation' also sparked an interesting debate on reviewing evaluation models. The concern raised on this matter relates to a need to review the prevalence of western evaluation practices, while also addressing transformative agenda that calls for decolonisation of Africa- evaluation system (Cloete, 2016; Chilisa, 2017; Ofir, 2018). Ofir (2018) asserts that the South African evaluation terms of reference located itself within the DAC criteria without adequately modifying this measure to suit what matters to the country and the African continent.

At the core of the argument of these researchers and academic scholars is the convergence of norms and principles that advocate for evaluation and research to be context-sensitive to societal issues, which they argue to be an area ignored by many (Mbava and Dahler-Larsen, 2019; Cloete, 2016; and Heider, 2017). The figure below provides an overview of key issues that constitute "Made in Africa Evaluation" view. The four critical steps include: decolonization of knowledge production and practice; evaluating existing models; research African evaluation models; development of African centred models in partnership with local communities. This research therefore aims to respond to a need to evaluate existing models.

**Figure 1: Four critical steps in African Evaluation**



Adapted from: Mjiba Frehiwot: Made in Africa Evaluation: Decolonializing Evaluation in Africa: eVALUation Matters Third Quarter 2019

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During the past three decades, the practice of evaluation has evolved as a discipline with new definitions, concepts methods, approaches, and applications. It is therefore critical to ensure that these concepts and theories are understandable to the intended evaluation users. These revised approaches and concepts require operational flexibility as well as an understanding of the origins, scope, and practices thereof (Goodyear, Barela, Jewiss, and Usinger, 2014). This study will examine whether the evaluation standards of the NES mimicked western models or whether they have created new meaning and transformed these Western models to reflect the African context.

#### **2.1.4 Key concepts that guide the design of evaluation standards**

Based on the review of literature the following concepts that guide the design of evaluation standards will be examined: ethical aspects, competence and capacity, quality of evaluation, accountability, utility, relevance, efficiency effectiveness, impact and sustainability.

These concepts will be described and this will be followed by highlighting the contested issues related to each concept. These concepts will be used as the first theoretical lens to guide the cross-walk analysis in Research Question 2.

#### **2.1.4.1 Ethical aspects**

Ethical standards aim among others, to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of the “subjects” being evaluated, there is a need to move beyond this constricted ethical focus on protecting only the implementers of the program evaluated. The focus should adopt a more accommodative approach where ethics become a determining factor of who is included or excluded in the evaluation process. Wiggins and Sileo (2020) argue that the standards should be cognisance of what they describe as “blind spots”; which they describe as the issues that hinder certain groups from voicing out policy issues that relates to their needs.

The commissioners and evaluators are required to carry out the evaluation with integrity and honesty, courtesy and respect for human rights, religious beliefs of all stakeholders. ASEAN-AFREAS (2016) framework encourages for evaluation methodology to explicitly incorporate issues of cultural diversity and sensitivity, gender, including the marginalised groups.



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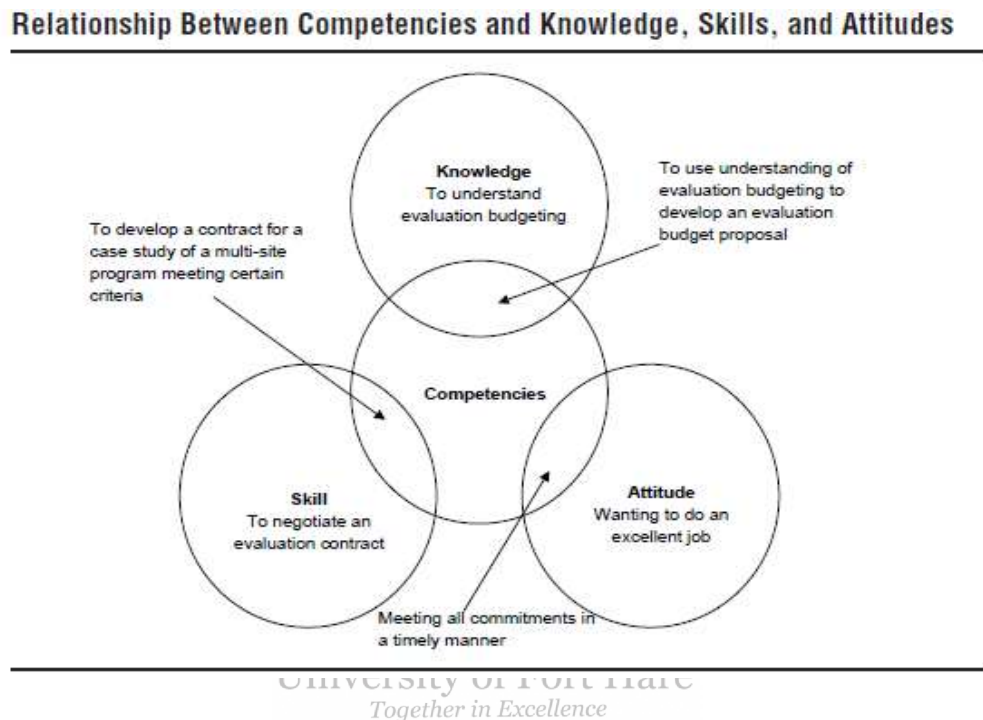
#### **2.1.4.2 Competence and Capacity**

Evaluation competencies encompasses the qualifications, experience, skills and attributes required by those hired within the evaluation function to execute their duties as specified and to ensure the credibility in the performance (Leslie et al., 2015; Podems 2014). In provision of ‘capacity’ as evaluation standard, Podems, (2014) argues that examination still needs to be pursued to determine at what point will all evaluation capacity interventions already provided be sufficient to build confidence in the departments to manage, conduct and commission evaluations.

According to Malaysian evaluation standards which mirrors the ASEAN Regional Framework on Evaluation Standards (ARFES), the guideline highlights that the target group required to implement the standards needs to be clearly articulated, given the competency levels that has to be taken into consideration. Evaluation competency cuts across all those involved in evaluations: which encompasses evaluation commissioners, evaluation managers, evaluation practitioners, and evaluation professionals. Based on this understanding, most evaluations associations and government institutions have developed competency frameworks to

categorize the knowledge base, skills and competencies essential for managing and conducting evaluations. **Figure 2:** provided below is an illustration on how these concepts play a role in evaluation and related standards that describe evaluation competency,

**Figure2: Relationship between competencies, knowledge and skills**



Adapted from “How do Competencies Differ from Skills and Knowledge?” by Schoonover Associates, (2008)

The above illustration, demonstrates the concept of “applied competence”, which denotes the ability to put into practice the relevant the knowledge, skills and attitudes in evaluation context.

#### **2.1.4.3 Quality of evaluation**

The definition of quality can be understood differently by everyone, depending on the context at which the concept is used. To some it can imply meeting the specification articulated, or responding to the service recipient’s needs, while to others it can imply the degree of excellence the item possesses. The broader description of what quality imply in reference to the evaluation standards, infer fitness for ‘use’. The concept on its own cover a range of other characteristics. Each evaluation association or organisation may have different building blocks for quality evaluations.

High quality evaluation reports can be an influential tool for the key stakeholders to hold the program implementers accountable for results; this also goes for learning purpose; and decision on whether to continue funding the project or call for its termination (Kawulich and Chilisa, 2012; DPME, 2018). Though Bester (2009) argues that the quality, independence and credibility of an evaluation is influenced by the level of competence of those conducting the evaluation study, which may suggest that there is a correlation between competency and quality of evaluation study, this is not always applicable. A highly professional evaluator can still produce a low-quality evaluation. This implies that the evaluation standards need to be implemented with caution on other separate quality control processes for evaluation. Developing the standards and related assessment tool of the National Evaluation System to 'quality assure' that evaluation processes are adhered to, so as to produce a quality evaluation report was therefore a proactive exercise. This study will therefore examine whether evaluations standards yielded quality evaluation reports.

#### **2.1.4.4 Accountability**

The concept of "accountability" is linked to the following areas, programme improvement which calls for informed decision to either improve, continue or terminate an intervention. The concept is also about reflecting on programme accomplishment, program reporting and professional growth (D'Brot and Keng, 2018). Previously this concept 'accountability' when engaged by government and donors would only be limited to financial management. Accountability would therefore be required to articulate how much funding was utilised, where, and on what. This further included accounting for issues of efficiency and cost effectiveness. However, given a result-based approach, accountability has taken a much broader implication to include compliance to regulations and professional norms, while showing visible results that benefits the public. The effect of 'accountability' as one of evaluations standards cannot be underestimated. This is required to demonstrate what benefit and value is attained by government interventions that are been executed. Studies highlight that in some countries, accountability has become one of the legislated standards of evaluation. In that instance, government programs are mandated by law to report their progress and achievements to the public on programmes implemented and those evaluated interventions.

#### 2.1.4.5 Utility

The aim behind including 'utility' concept among the standards was intended to embrace a 'utilisation-focused approach' which fosters programme improvement as well as an enhancement of accountability (Mapitsa and Chirau, 2019). On the basis of this assertion the AfrEa (2007) states that for evaluations to empower stakeholders, and win their ownership and buy-in on the use of findings, the study must be conducted by competent evaluators whose credibility cannot be questioned. The standard encompasses a number of concepts that relate to what influences the use of evaluations, which also covers the importance of the time frame to disseminate the evaluation. Utility standards are anticipated to intensify the level to which program stakeholders find evaluation studies valuable in meeting their needs (JCSEE, 2014; Patton, 20112).

Among other uses of evaluation is the need to inform policy review to parliament and those institutions doing an oversight role. The functions of evaluation and related standards should go beyond just providing information for policy making, but also trigger the debate and argument that relate to current political and economic space (Aghumian, 2014). Such debate can be explored if one understands the ontological and epistemological bases informing the implementers and evaluators, as guided by evaluation standards. AfrEA (2007) highlights that a critical step to enhance capacity of evaluation as well as its utility is through collective efforts and engagement of all key stakeholders.

One of the global frameworks on evaluation standards, ASEAN Regional Framework of Evaluation Standards, flags out evaluation utilization to be among key issues embraced by its evaluation approach. The figure below: Structure of ASEA Regional Framework on Evaluation Standards provides description and intersection of its core elements, which encompass '*evaluation management*', '*evaluation conduct*' and '*evaluation utilisation*'; with key considerations being '*policy and regulatory framework*', '*ethics*' and '*professionalism*'. These are understood to be the same pillars adopted by Malaysian Evaluation Standards.



**Figure 3: Structure of ASEA Regional Framework on Evaluation Standards**



Adapted from Malaysian Framework for Evaluation Policy and Standards (2016).

#### **2.1.4.6 Relevance and Efficiency**

Relevance implies the extent to which the objectives of a development intervention are constant with 'beneficiaries and partners' requirements, including the country's needs and global commitments (OECD 2010; Heider, 2017). This criterion informs the continuity or termination of any given project (Palenberg, 2011).

Efficiency assesses how economical and cost effective has the resources being converted to results. Efficiency does not only focus on the least costs, but also has to do with ensuring the evaluation or intervention evaluated uses resources that are appropriate and available to achieve the desired deliverables, in terms of quantity and quality.

#### **2.1.4.7 Effectiveness, impact and sustainability**

Effectiveness focuses on the extent the intervention's objectives and outcomes were achieved. Impact refers to the short- and long-term effects of the intervention both directly and indirectly and further focuses on the broader consequence of the intervention. The last concept sustainability assesses the likelihood of continuation of intervention benefits over the long term. The concept of sustainability is increasingly becoming the central theme in evaluation practice, more so it looks into the lasting improvement of the intervention (Williams and Robinson, 2020).



#### 2.1.4.8 Equity

Gender, equality and equity in society are cross-cutting subjects within the development policies of most global funders and national governments, (Bamberger and Segone, 2011). According to World Bank (2012) 'gender power relations' is one of the critical aspects at the centre of development concerns. The application of the concept enables an understanding on who accesses resources, and who becomes beneficiaries of projects and government initiatives. The commitment to promote gender equality and inclusiveness in all its forms is one of the ongoing efforts asserted in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals. In reflecting and redesigning the evaluation standards, it will be critical to revisit these global commitments to inform review on evaluation standards, specifically on disaggregation of evaluation data. This data needs to be detailed in describing beneficiaries according to social criteria (e.g. sex, ethnicity, age, disability, geographic location, income or education) (UNEG, 2016; World Bank, 2012). This standard should therefore be explicit in requiring evaluators to be able to identify and analyse the gendered dimensions reflecting in the evaluations undertaken. Drawing from Longwe's (1991) framework of empowerment, Vaca (2013) asserts that gender equality indicators are assessment of performance that require the gathering and analysis of gender disaggregated information to define who take part in and who benefits from development activities.



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The UNEG (2016) highlights that inclusion of 'gender equity' is required as a commitment to be adhered to. In one of its engagements with partners, the World Bank upholds that the concept of "gender" needs to be covered in evaluation reports, (World Bank discussions 2005). The standard in this regard requires the classification of gender to be explicit with gender variances on diverse projects that address employment issues, social development interventions, economic growth and poverty reduction.

To illustrate the need for evaluation standards to be more explicit on gender matters, the World Bank discussion further highlights that the latest examination of Development Cooperation Agencies OECD (2010) found that only 41 percent of evaluation reports followed 'gender-sensitive log frames. Literature on this matter reflects that this oversight led to the review process of the evaluation standards of the UNEG. This further led to principles of human rights and gender equality being adopted for integration into all stages of an evaluation (UNEG, 2016). The initiative also steered United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to

make a call for evaluators to be sensitive to address issues of discrimination and gender inequality in their application of evaluation standards.

The above description and issues raised on concepts will be used to inform the analysis of the South African Evaluation Standards; and further guide the cross-walk analysis of evaluation standard in the South African National Evaluation System against international normative frameworks. These concepts will be also used to inform the theoretical frameworks underpinning the design South African government evaluation standards; and finally, they will be used to examine how the evaluation standards and the Evaluation Quality Assessment Tool were applied by commissioners and evaluators.

#### **2.1.5 Evaluation standards in the context of discourse on professionalization of evaluation**

The field of evaluation like any other discipline, is guided by common values, norms and standards that guide the profession. It should be acknowledged that evaluation as an emerging discipline draws its professional standards, criteria concepts, and methods from other fields of study such as, psychology, education, anthropology and other related social sciences. This signifies the importance and interdependent relationship between evaluation and other fields of study (Stufflebeam and Coryn, 2014).

Whilst some of these occupational fields require certification and accreditation as an authentic criterion for professionalization, the critical question that dominates 'professionalization of evaluation' is whether certification and accreditation is required to professionalise this field of work or not. The independence of evaluation as a profession and a discipline is anchored in its evaluation standards. To have a better understanding of both positive and negative effects of professionalization of evaluation as a discipline, it will be critical to define the word 'professionalization'. Chaubey, Tiwari and Dubey (2015) point out that professions are normally administered by norms, standards and status, with the responsibility of enforcement for application being delegated to the relevant professional bodies whose function is to regulate, describe, endorse, oversee and support the profession related matters of its members. Professionalization embodies a 'process' of an occupation to seek promoting itself into a 'professional occupation' through specialised knowledge, skills and credentials that confirm that one has required competencies. In some occasions, certification and qualification to confirm completion of that occupation profession becomes one of the requirements.

The focus area of this research study in this instance is how the design of evaluation standards enables the managing and conducting of evaluations by professionals to adhere to these professional standards articulated for the evaluation profession.

Professionalization of evaluation is beneficial in terms of ensuring that the occupation is regulated by a professional body with certain service “standards” that are adhered to by its registered members. Most occupational fields require certification and accreditation as an authentic criterion for professionalization. Mathison (2011) extends this argument to propose that the evaluation field should nurture practitioners by advocating for the inclusion of evaluation coursework as a compulsory module for most degree programs.

According to Picciotto (2011) cited by Rodriguez-Bilella (2017), professionalization of evaluation should be anchored to pursue the following benefits: recognized occupational expertise and professional independence which may be exercised through articulating the competency framework of the profession. Rodriguez-Bilella describes that this may include approval of evaluation guidelines as well as enforcement of ethical and evaluation standards, including the responsibility that should be demonstrated through the quality of one's work, (the list is not exhaustive). Application of evaluation standards, guiding principles and ethical codes are among the vital elements for professionalising evaluation. Goremuheche (2018) and Wilcox and King (2014) assert that even though competence is mostly associated with knowledge, skills, or attitudes (or aptitudes or dispositions) that qualify an individual to effectively execute the activities on a given occupation, the role of adhering to the given standards in a profession cannot be ignored. The figure below clearly demonstrates “evaluation principles, ethics and standards” as one of the key pillars of professionalization.

**Figure 4: The six pillars EvalPartners identified critical for professionalization.**

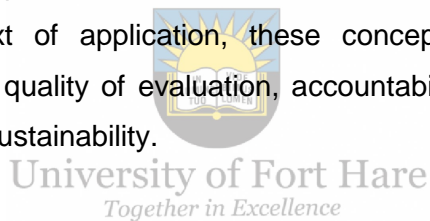


Source: United Nations Evaluation Group: UNEG Professionalization of Evaluation Concept Paper: (2016)

Though evaluation standards reflect to be among the critical components for professionalization as described in figure 4, the design of the standards should clearly demonstrate how critical the standards are in improving the system they are applied within, be it in evaluation or any other field of work.

#### **2.1.6 Synthesis of key findings and gaps from review of literature**

Based on the review of literature the following key empirical findings were observed: evaluation standards play a critical role in guiding and assessing the quality of an evaluation when managing and conducting an evaluation. Globally the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria has been observed as dominant framework to influence the design of global evaluation standards and approaches. A developmental approach that is more context sensitive is proposed by some authors who challenge this dominance of western approaches, and argue that evaluation criteria and standards need to articulate 'new meaning that is transformative nature'. This is in line with advocates who promote the decolonising the dominant western epistemology; and those who uphold the perspective of an indigenous and "Made in Africa" evaluation. The key concepts embedded in the evaluation standards are contested and dependent on the context of application, these concepts include – ethical aspects, competence and capacity, quality of evaluation, accountability, utility, relevance, efficiency effectiveness, impact and sustainability.



There were key gaps identified from the review of literature. First, there is no empirical evidence to link how the design of the evaluation standards influences the quality and use of evaluation; and, secondly, there is no empirical evidence to predict with certainty how the developed standards unfold in practice when applied in any given field. This research attempts to explore in more detail and respond to these research gaps in literature.

## **2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK UNDERPINNING THE STUDY**

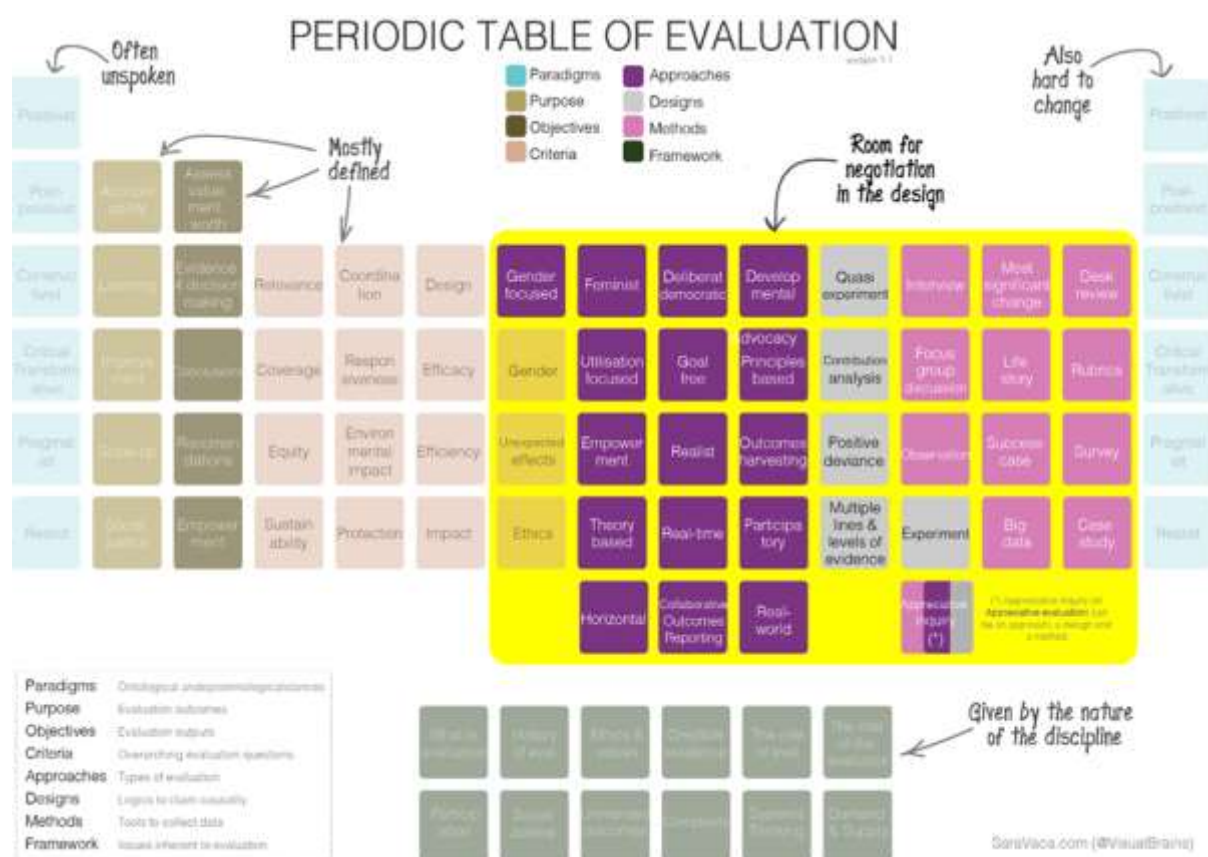
The first theoretical framework that constituted the concepts (in section 2.1.4) which have been described as concepts that guide the design and application of evaluation standards will be used to inform the analysis of the South African Evaluation Standards across international frameworks.

The second theoretical framework below will be used to examine the implicit theoretical paradigms that underpin the design and application of the evaluation standards.

## 2.2.1 Vaca's 'Periodic Table' of Evaluation

To deepen the analysis of the design of evaluation standards, this research study used Vaca's (2017) model and paradigmatic approach as its second theoretical framework. Vaca (2017) 'Periodic Table' as illustrated below demonstrates the '**value of the paradigms**' in opening up a variety of the methodological richness of the discipline to broaden the options on the evaluation designs. In her argument, Vaca asserts that when evaluation team members engage on evaluation objectives, criteria, approaches, designs, and methods, they are guided and influenced by their own paradigm/s, which usually remain essential, yet unspoken of.

**Table 1: Periodic Table of Evaluation**



Adapted from: The Evaluation Periodic Table by Sara Vaca (2017)

This theoretical framework was chosen to respond to the problem of the absence of a theory that underpins the design of the national evaluation standards. Vaca's theoretical framework was considered most recent and appropriate for this study since it clearly illustrates and describes how paradigm can guide and influence the design of the evaluation standards in defining evaluation objectives, criteria, approaches, designs, and methods for their evaluation study.

### 2.2.2 The concept “paradigm”

Individuals construct their own thoughts and knowledge of the world through experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences. It is through describing these occurrences and their implications that gave birth to what is known as philosophical paradigms.

According to Hussain, Elyas, Nasseef (2013), the concept paradigm was first presented by Kuhn, (1962), quoted) in his manuscript ‘*The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*’, in which he explains paradigms as ‘an integrated cluster of substantive concepts, variables and problems attached with corresponding methodological approach and tools’, (Kuhn, 1962, quoted in Flick, 2009: page 69). According to Rehman and Alharthi (2016) a paradigm comprises the following elements of a belief structure: i) axiology, ii) ontology, iii) epistemology, iv) methodology and methods. According to Convey, (1989) cited by (Makombe, 2017) the paradigms we construct in our minds have a great effect as they create the lens through which we perceive the world. Vaca’s models show how the opinions and decisions of the individuals involved in the evaluation design, be it commissioners, individual and organization level and evaluation team, are all directed by their own paradigm/s.



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In an attempt to assess, and analyse the normative design of evaluation standards, this research study provides an extensive attention to research paradigms. This research study aims to examine how the application of concepts within the Table 1 ‘Periodic Table of Evaluation’ can be used to strengthen the construction of evaluation standards within the National Evaluation System.

### 2.2.3 Perspective on the use of paradigms in academic research and its influence in evaluations

The orientation that this study took is to reflect on application of the concept ‘research paradigm’ in both evaluations’ studies and research work. Both the term ‘evaluation’ and ‘research’ will be used in this discussion given the resemblance these have in the use of evaluation tools, concepts and methods. This will be undertaken with consideration that evaluation is more inclined to programme assessment, while research is aimed at broadening and generating new scientific knowledge. The study therefore intends to highlight how the use of paradigms can deepen the robustness of evaluation standards discourse. The purpose of



this study is not necessarily intended to promote one paradigm above the other, but rather to demonstrate the need for deliberate self-awareness on evaluators and researchers on how their own paradigmatic choices influence the evaluation and research design and findings.

Paradigm is known to be a conceptual lens through which the researcher or evaluator examines the methodological aspects of their project to determine the research methods that will be used, and how data will be analysed (Kijunva, 2017). Although literature highlights that it is vital for any research investigation to be directed by a paradigm, Makombe (2017) whose study focused on '*assessing the extent to which Students in South Africa understand Research Paradigm*' indicates an interesting observation on this matter. The author asserts that a high number of new entrants in the research field opt not to make a reference of the research paradigm guiding their investigation.

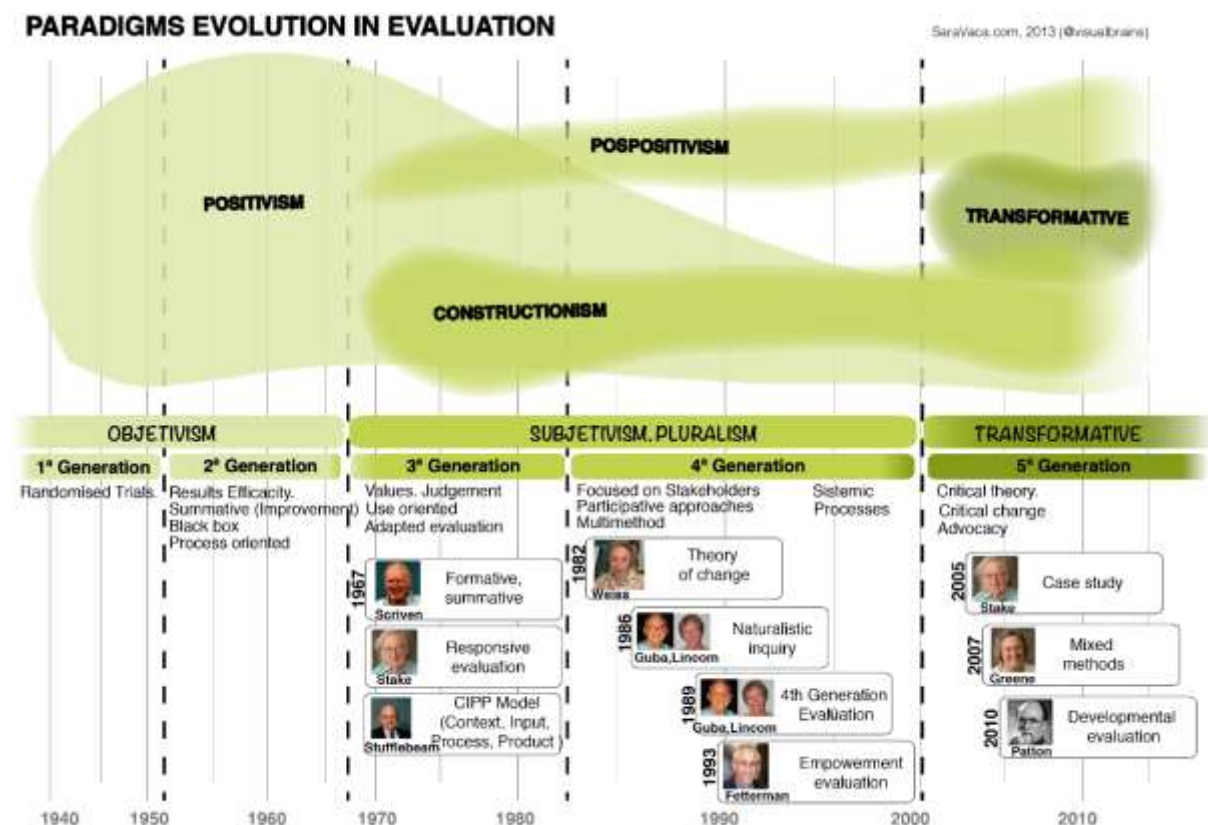
Makombe (2017) further attests that this challenge is further exacerbated by experienced researchers who at times become a bit careless in their expression of these terms, to the extent that it becomes confusing to early stage and emerging researchers. This challenge that has been identified around embracing paradigms is what Hussain et al., (2013)) refer to as a 'slippery slope for fresh researchers'. The observation their study highlights indicate that paradigms is increasingly becoming a confusing phenomenon for new researchers. Even to the experienced researchers, Hussain et al., (2013) argue that the mounting variety of ideas on methodologies, evolving paradigms, and theoretical frameworks becomes a daunting process that at times result in these researchers choosing to overlook them. This research intends to examine how the policy makers and evaluation team dealt with the issue of paradigms.

Though it is acknowledged that locating paradigms within the investigative work is a challenging practise to many researchers and evaluators, O'Gorman and MacIntosh (2015) point out that, the aim of articulating and setting out one's research philosophy is to provide an indication to other researchers and evaluators what informs the basis on which one would have make certain findings.

## 2.2.4 Paradigms evolution in evaluation

Vaca's presentation in **Figure: 5 Paradigm Evolution in Evaluation** below depicts evolution of the different paradigms over time and their influence on the different generation of evaluation theorists and their methodological approaches. The different paradigms will be further elaborated in section 2.2. 6

**Figure 5: Paradigm Evolution in Evaluation**



Source: Evaluation Paradigms Evolution by Vaca (2013)

## 2.2.5 Key philosophical assumptions associated with paradigms

Mertens and Wilson (2019) provide a simple narrative on the concepts and explain that paradigms are made up of four sets of assumptions that address people's perspectives of what is ethical, what is real, what is considered to be valid knowledge, and what is considered to be appropriate evaluation methods. Paradigmatic nature and theoretical framework(s) of research method flows from researcher's view on ontology, epistemology, and axiology (Ponterotto, 2005). Hussain et al., (2013) and Mertens and Wilson (2019) inform that a paradigm is all about researchers' philosophical orientation which features the following philosophical assumptions:



- The **axiological belief system** which asks: What is the nature of ethics?
- The **ontological belief system** which enquires: What is the nature of reality? Describing it further ontology is a concept that asks “what do we believe and accept to be true about the nature of reality”
- The **epistemological belief system** which probes: What is the nature of knowledge, and what is the relationship between the knower and that which would be known?
- The **methodological belief system** which questions: What are the systematic approaches to gathering information about what would be known?
- The **methods**: which ask about a strategy or rather a plan on how research will be undertaken. Methods are further defined as specific processes and techniques to collect and analyse data (Mills, 2014)

These are said to be elements that mould and define the conduct of an inquiry (O’Gorman and MacIntosh 2015). The study aims use these elements, to assess their influence in design and application of the NES evaluation standards.

Meterns and Wilson (2019) advocate that understanding the philosophical assumptions of the different paradigms can enable the evaluators and stakeholders who commissioned an evaluation to be able to deliberate on the following questions from each study:

- What evaluation in each philosophical paradigm would look like?
- How would the evaluator arrange and plan the evaluation?
- Whether the evaluator should be involved with the stakeholders or not?
- How would the evaluator’s assumptions and world view influence and guide his/her decision?

## 2.2.6 Brief description of often unspoken of ‘paradigms ‘

These paradigms are briefly explained below. It should further be noted that the axiological, ontological, epistemological and methodological dimensions will be examined from the perspective of the selected paradigms.

### **2.2.6.1 Positivist paradigm**

In a broad sense, positivism is a philosophical belief that adheres to the 'factual' information acquired through measurements and observation. The evaluator becomes the observer. Evaluators and researchers in this paradigm are able to recognize and appreciate casual relationships among factors which become essential for them to be capable to make forecasts. This implies that the positivist researcher should be competent to observe incidences in the particular phenomenon they have studied, and be able to generalise about what can be anticipated elsewhere in the world. Positivists believe that strict observance and adherence to methodological rules results in objective truth. Within this emphasis, for the positivists large sample sizes are valued over smaller samples.

### **2.2.6.2 Post positivist paradigm**

It has been observed that the post-positivism just like positivism theorists, describe their reason for conducting research is to discover laws that are generalizable and those which can also oversee the universe. It is vital to state that the post-positivists share a lot in common with positivists, even though literature indicates that most of the research methods and practices, specifically in social science currently fit better into the post-positivist category (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017). The argument these authors bring across is that irrespective of how the researcher/evaluator observes scientific method research, research findings and outcomes are neither totally impartial, nor indisputably definite. Post positivists believe that observations are influenced by the viewer's biases and worldview. With regards to being influenced by this paradigm, the evaluator would opt to work collaboratively with those who have implemented and or are being affected by the program evaluated.

### **2.2.6 3 Constructive paradigm**

Constructivists believe strongly to the relativist stance that accepts several yet equally valid realities' (Ponterotto, 2005). Constructivists embrace the idea that reality is created in the mind of the individual, rather than it being an external single unit. Ponterotto (2005) argues that the meaning is concealed and must be uncovered through deep consideration, which can be stimulated over contact between the participant and the researcher investigating a specific phenomenon. The constructivist philosophy portrays the idea that learning does not just occur from the traditional method of teaching, but learning occurs only when the learner discovers

the knowledge through experimentation and doing. To constructivists, knowledge and truth are not discovered by mind, but created by perspective. The value of an evaluation centres on the ability of evaluators to use the various lenses through which stakeholders and the evaluator make sense of an evaluand.

#### **2.2.6.4 Critical transformative paradigm**

According to Mertens (2014) cited by Romm (2015) critical transformative emphasizes emancipation of the disadvantaged groups. In its quest to see development on their part, this paradigm puts its attention on examination of social justice. Transformative paradigm is characterized by placing central importance on the lives and experiences of marginalized groups, such as women, ethnic/racial minorities, people with disabilities, and those who are poor. The value of an evaluation is primarily determined by the extent to which it reciprocates power with marginalized groups and improves the conditions for such groups. (Mertens, 2009) argues that the axiology of this paradigm is anchored upon the following principles: culturally admiration, promotion of social justice, addressing inequities, advancement of human rights, principle of reciprocity and acknowledgement of public strengths and resilience. The social world is constituted by an unbiased reality, but also subject to how a person as an individual is positioned in the world (politically, socially, culturally etc.). The epistemological knowledge is produced by deliberating on cultural and historical ways of comprehending and challenging power relations between evaluators and stakeholders. Research methods in this paradigm may take the form of participatory approach, which could be undertaken quantitatively or qualitatively.

#### **2.2.6.5 Pragmatic Paradigm**

The pragmatic paradigm refers to a worldview that concentrates on “what works” rather than what might be considered absolutely and objectively “true” or “real.” The word pragmatism is formerly derived from the Greek term “pragma,” which implies action, (Kaushik and Walsh 2019). Pragmatism is typically associated with reasoning that interchanges back and forth between deduction (assumptions) and induction (orientation) This assertion infers that the researcher is actively involved in generating data as well as theories. The pragmatic paradigm is useful for guiding research design, especially when a mixture of diverse approaches is theoretically inconsistent. Pragmatists reframe their ontological view of reality with consideration on the impediments of human behaviour. The pragmatist attitude is to intervene

into the future with the purpose to construct an improved atmosphere and world. In doing so these theorists focus primarily on data that is established to be valuable for stakeholders. The ontological perspective observes and promotes the use of mixed methods. Holding the belief that reality is individually interpreted, the methodological choices are therefore determined by the evaluation questions.

### **2.2.7 Use of theory of the paradigm approach in evaluation**

The paradigm approach will be used as a theoretical lens to analyse the design of the evaluation standards of the South African National Evaluation System. The theory of paradigm will be used to understand how evaluation managers and evaluator roles are embedded in the evaluation standards

According to Tuli (2010), an evaluator undertakes his research journey under the framework of some paradigms. If an evaluation researcher is clear about which paradigm to use, selecting methodology, methods and research design become pretty much easier to decide. A paradigm sets down the intent, motivation and expectations of researchers.

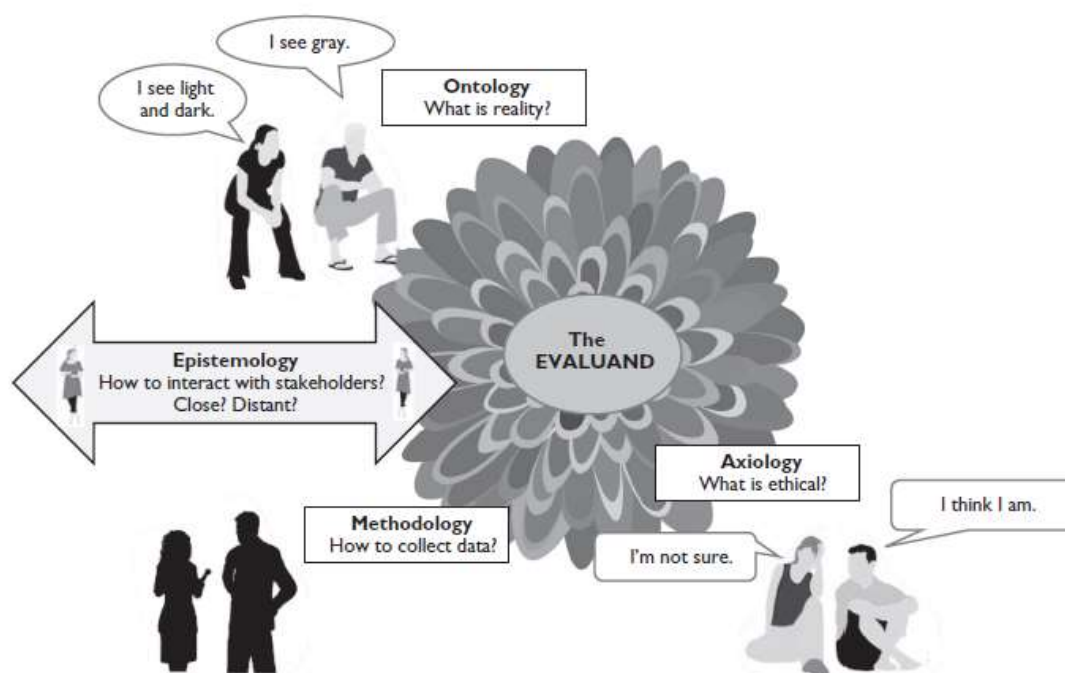


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Most emerging evaluators and researchers find paradigms abstract to understand, though acknowledgement of such conceptual lens is vital for determining and reviewing systematic aspects of the research, as this guides research on what method and how data will be analysed (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017). Literature suggests that investigative enquiry that is grounded on a clear paradigm enables the study a wealth of valuable information that provides a frame of reference regarding how the findings of the study should be construed. Based on this view, Rehman and Alharthi (2016) assert that researchers and evaluators, need to comprehend and express beliefs about the nature of reality, what can be known about it and how to go about attaining this knowledge. Using the evaluation standards to guide the study should not be an undertaking that is done in a vacuum, but should concede to philosophical paradigms that influence the researcher's world view including the orientation of the study, (O'Gorman and MacIntosh, 2015). The significance of researchers and evaluators to understand the philosophical underpinnings of their study is therefore an aspect that requires attention.

The figure 6 highlights the extent of relationship between the evaluator, evaluand and the philosophical paradigms influencing the evaluation process.

**Figure 6: The four philosophical belief systems within paradigms and how these relate to evaluations and the evaluator's role**



Adopted from Mertens and Wilson 2019: The four philosophical belief system

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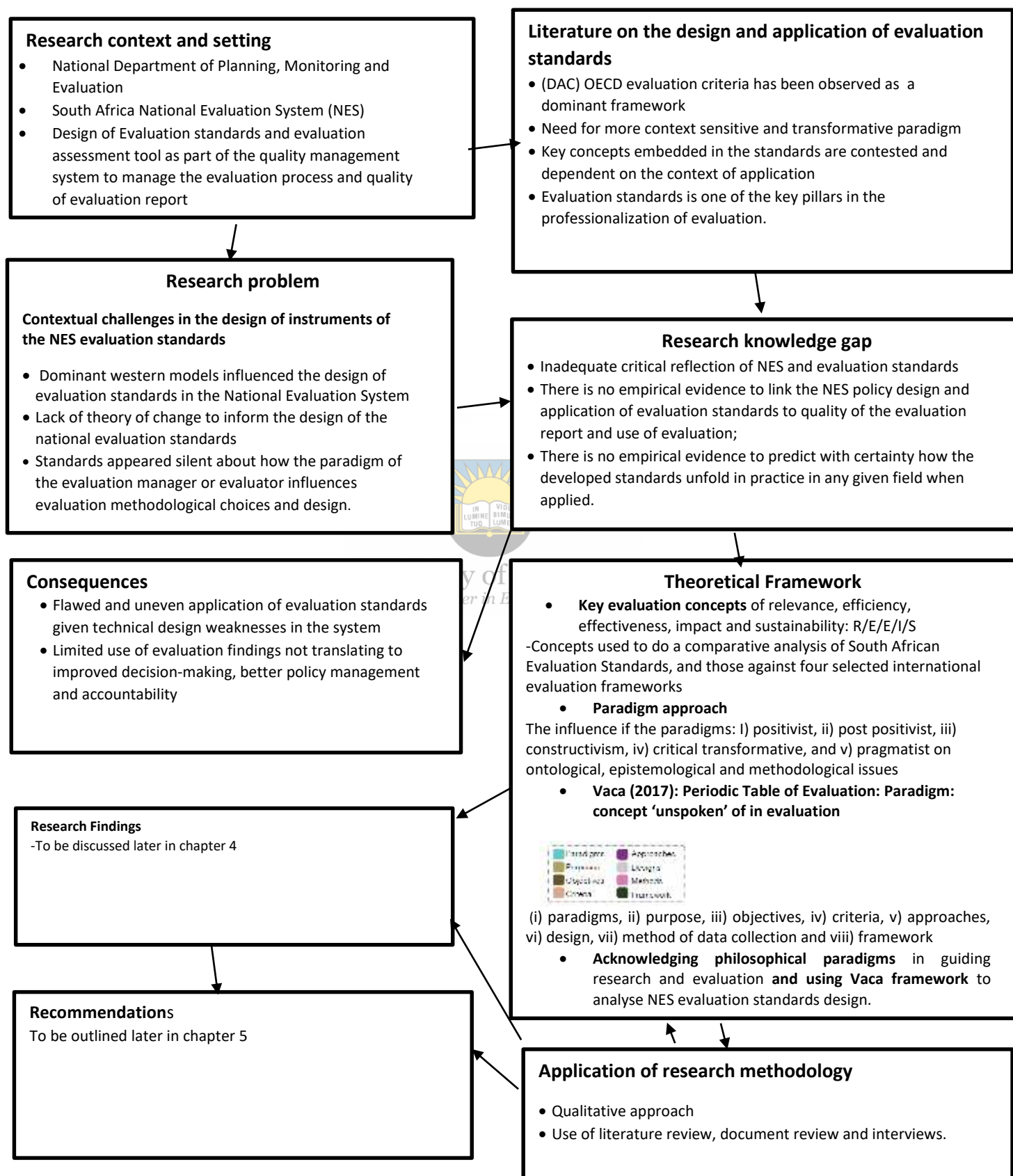
The figure infers that diverse logical orientation may have an influence on how one view, understand and interpret the surroundings. Mertens and Wilson (2019) in figure 6, provide a descriptive presentation to reflect how this generic interpretation of evaluators' roles is beneficial to assume diverse roles throughout the paradigm theories.

The following questions will be used to analyse the evaluation manager and evaluator's role embedded in the standards:

- The ontological question: What is the evaluation team (commissioner, evaluation manager and evaluator) views about the form and nature of reality?
- The epistemological question: What is the relationship between the evaluation teams (would be knower) and that which can be known about the reality?
- The methodological question: How can the evaluation team go about attempting to know that which can be known about the reality?
- The paradigm question: How does paradigm of the evaluation team influence the evaluation roles in planning phase, implementation phase and post evaluation phase.

## 2.3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

**Table 2: The Elements for Conceptual Framework of the study**



## 2.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The chapter focused on review of literature by examining how the global dominance of western approaches influenced the design of evaluation standards of the NES. This chapter provided two sets of theoretical lenses to guide the analysis of data in this study. The first theoretical framework constituted the concepts (in section 2.1.4) that were used to inform the analysis of the South African Evaluation Standards across international frameworks. The second theoretical framework described Vaca (2017): Periodic Table of Evaluation: Paradigm that was used to examine the implicit theoretical paradigms that underpin the design and application of the national evaluation standards. This section flagged out limitations and challenges of emerging researchers and evaluators when it comes to articulating philosophical stance guiding their research and evaluation studies. Given the lack of acknowledgement to articulate and embed paradigm theories as a requirement within evaluation standards, the similar limitation goes beyond being observed on emerging researchers and evaluators but is seen to dominate the evaluation practice at large. The last section provided detailed elements on the conceptual framework of the study.



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## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

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#### 3. INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, a review of literature and theoretical framework for the study were discussed. This chapter describes the research methodology that was applied to collect and analyse data for this study. The justification for the use of a qualitative research method will be explained. The chapter will then discuss the data collection approach, including the reasons behind the choice of interviews informants. The chapter also explains the adaptation of methodological approaches given challenges experienced as a result of the Covid-19 virus and how this impacted on the approach for interviews. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitation of the study.



#### 3.1 RESEARCH APPROACH

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This research study used a qualitative research approach, which is known to be comprehensive in terms of exploratory, explanatory, interpretive, or descriptive nature, (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). Qualitative approach has been chosen in this research to produce an in-depth and descriptive data and information on the design and implementation of the evaluation standards. The qualitative method in this research includes, literature review, document review and interviews.

The qualitative research approach is an innovative, investigative and exploratory in nature which aims to examine and analyse, in order to solicit an in-depth descriptive information on the design of the evaluation standards, (Creswell, 2007). This exploratory method of inquiry was used to comprehend the theory behind the design of evaluation standards of the South African National Evaluation System. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011) exploration refers to a scientific management research that is conducted to examine a topic or to provide a basic awareness of the topic. This approach is used when a researcher examines a new interest or when the subject of investigation itself is relatively new.



With its descriptive nature exploratory operates under ontological assumption that there is no single unitary reality of perception. It therefore builds on concepts and information gathered from others. It is on this basis that Gavin (2008) affirms that qualitative research is an enabler to access subjective perceptions. To gather information on the design of NES standards, data was collected from different perspectives. Though qualitative research is often seen to be subjective, the data collected through diverse views was corroborated by wealth of evidence from literature.

Qualitative research has the ability to explore and to discover in-depth issues. The advantage of using qualitative research is further expressed by Atieno (2009), who argues that qualitative research focuses on the process rather than outcomes. Ayres (2007) asserts that participants in qualitative research are selected not to represent the population distribution, but to provide a unique vision for the phenomenon. Qualitative researchers seek differences and not the similarities (Barusch, Gringeri and Cambron, 2013). The inference of this statement suggests that qualitative researchers use their natural settings to make sense of, or to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. In relation to this study, the qualitative approach is used to unpack and understand the processes during the design of evaluation standards in the context of the National Evaluation System.



Qualitative research does not examine variables but events and cases that are informative and specific to the needs of the study (Atieno, 2009). The abundance of information intended to be solicited through participants' responses in the interviews clarifies that the reason behind having a comparatively small sample size. Relatively small sample sizes are essential due to an enormous volume of information that can produced and collected from participants (Ayres, 2007). Qualitative method plays a critical role when a study is intended to examine and identify factors that contribute to effectiveness or unsuccessful outcome of an intervention. This study used relatively small sample to yield in depth and sufficient information to address the research questions.

Conducting a research during this period was therefore both challenging and exciting: Challenging because of readjustment on empirical methods previously intended to be used while at the same time exciting to learn how to be adaptive when a research process gets disrupted by unexpected global challenges.

### **3.2 ADAPTIVE METHODOLOGICAL CHANGES IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19**

Conducting a research study in a time of a worldwide pandemic has not being an easy task but rather a critical time for researchers and evaluators to assess how the pandemic is directly or unintentionally affect and reshape the research and evaluation practice (Branco, Raimondo and Vaessen, 2020). Wild and Booth (2016) assert that this type of reflection is an adaptive approach which in a research design should be at the core of executing advancement of a programme while readjusting the research process where it is necessary. Conducting a research study during such a phase can at times be a messy process. As the researcher I had to be agile and adapt my research methodology by looking beyond the 'normal' and try to craft and discover new pathways to navigate the study.

As the virus outbreak resulted in restrictions on movements and lockdowns across provinces in South Africa including in every country, it required drastic changes in how institutions operate. This was also the case with educational institutions that had to adjust their learning styles and timetables while libraries and academic bookstores could not be easily accessible. In relation to this study, the emergence of these unexpected times together with the constraints on movements necessitated a slight modification on some methods that were previously planned for data collection. Branco, Raimondo and Vaessen (2020) also assert that the implication of global crisis in evaluation is a unique uncomfortable period which calls for evaluators to rethink their approaches.

As a researcher I needed to do some adjustments and make critical decisions to reformulate the approach for data collection, to adapt to changing context of crisis and resilience to the COVID 19 pandemic. The changes applied in the research method have been discussed under each specific subsection where these amendments had to be effected.

### **3.3 DOCUMENT REVIEW**

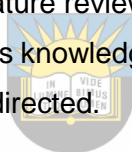
A document review is described as a systematic gathering, documentation, analysis and interpretation of data. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) define document review as a summary of document analysis administered by collecting data and reviewing current documents related to the study. The focus on document review should not therefore be on how many documents

the researcher should gather (even though a wide array of documents is better), but this should be about quality of the document rather than quantity (Bowen, 2009).

In this research study document review was used as a method of data collection to examine the key components of the evaluation standards in the South African National Evaluation, the Evaluation Quality Assessment Tool, including assessment of selected international evaluation standards.

### **3.4 LITERATURE REVIEW AS DATA COLLECTION METHOD**

The purpose of a literature review is to acquire better understanding of the existing research studies and discussions related to a particular area or topic of study. It enables one to assess the existing state of research topic while exploring further questions, gaps and approaches undertaken in past studies of similar topics one is exploring. According to University of Melbourne (2013), the purpose of literature review is described as a determination to explore what is known on the topic, how well this knowledge is recognized and established, and where future research studies might best be directed.



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The review of literature highlighted the debates related to evaluation standards within discourse of evaluation discipline and practice. Literature review will also be applied to enable critical reflective of other literatures so as to elaborate on the inferences presented through such observation. Evidence gathered from literature review will be used to generate new ideas to strengthen the evaluation standards and also to justify the relevance of this proposed research. Research findings from this study will be used to corroborate with similar findings from literature review; or challenge established as “truths” from literature.

### **3.5 CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS AS A METHOD FOR DATA COLLECTION**

Interviews were adopted to collect data from a selected category of individuals and institutions that have played a meaningful role in the design and application of the evaluation standards for National Evaluation System. The purpose was to solicit their observations and understanding on the design of the evaluation standards. Interviews are regarded as one of the most prevailing and extensively used method of data collection within the social sciences

(Bradford and Cullen, 2011). They are regarded significant because they enable researchers to explore diverse viewpoints and to gather in-depth interpretations of people's experience. A semi-structured interview which consisted of several key questions were therefore used in this research study.

### **3.5.1 Adaptation of interview approach**

Government departments and private companies worldwide transformed how they conduct business due to the onset and spread of COVID-19. As a result, social distancing and remote working became concepts that most organisation had to adapt with. This has also impacted on how researchers and evaluators worked as they were confronted with the responsibility to modify their research plans and designs. Due to health and safety regulatory measures the researcher redesigned the approach from having physical settings for interviews, but rather opted to conduct interviews telephonically and online.

### **3.5.2 Benefits and limitations of interviews**

The intention to conduct interviews was due to advantages associated with this approach, which among others include the opportunity it avails to the researcher to judge the non-verbal behaviour of the responded which can be complemented by flexibility on the part of the interviewer to probe further to maintain momentum during the discussion. Like any other data collection method, interviews also have strengths and weaknesses. One of the limitations could be inaccessibility of the targeted sample. In some instances, the information provided may be inaccurate given the respondents who may not want to provide an undesirable answer that may present the project evaluated in a bad light.

What was identified critical for this process was also to keep the interview questionnaire short so that neither the researcher nor the respondent gets agitated to respond to a lengthy interview process. Parvaresh-Masoud (2018) argues that one of the possible challenges around electronic interview could be verification of participants' identity. Electronic interviews were therefore undertaken with acknowledgment on implication it may pose on data quality. The SWOT analysis developed is therefore intended to reflect in significant challenges and opportunities that telephonic interview can pose to the research process undertaken considering the context of COVID 19.

Strengths	Weaknesses
High coverage at lower cost on travelling to respondents' locations. Compliance with required social distancing norms.	Lack of access and observation to non-verbal cues. Lack of detailed responses due to potential distractions that are associated with remote working.
Opportunities	Threats
Audio records of calls for future reference Fast timelines. User friendly applications like Zoom, Microsoft Team which employees are familiar with.	Misunderstanding and miscommunication during telephonic interview. Given possibility of respondents confined to a common space with families due to the lockdown imposed, the process may not be given the adequate attention unlike in a formal setting. Deliberate falsification of responses.

### 3.6 POPULATION AND SAMPLING



The ability to identify a sample that is reliable for assessing any program or project and also having the capability to accurately reflect the population of interest is one of the critical aspects for an evaluation study. The sample size is an important component of any empirical study, hence it has to make interpretations and inferences around its population. When methodological issues are discussed, it becomes critical to highlight sampling procedures applied in the study.

The study adopted a purposive sampling, which focuses on key individuals or organisation that have certain roles in the development and application of the evaluation standards. Palys (2008) argues that purposive sampling is virtually similar to qualitative research, hence the focus is not on the 'central tendency of a larger population' but observations, orientation and roles of a particular group and how these influences the case evaluated. The sample size was therefore limited to 5 participants whose roles are described in the next section. The purposive sampling method, is also called judgment sampling. This is due to the deliberate choice of participants that is informed by the qualities and unique capabilities they possess.

The population of the study constituted all the key role players who contributed to the design of the National Evaluation System. The key role players in the NES will include evaluation managers in Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, national and provincial government departments. The Office of the Premier (OTPs) including external evaluators contracted by DPME to conduct government evaluations. In order to maintain focus of the study within the delimited scope, changes were later effected to narrow the scope of the research focus. The assessment on 'application' of evaluation standards on the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) case study was reviewed and removed from the study. These changes resulted in the study focusing on interviewing only five (5) interviewees instead of eight (8).

The sample for this study is described in the table below.

**Table 3 Sampling size**

Name of department/ agency	Responsible official	Number of respondents
1. DPME	Former Head of the National Evaluation System	1
2. DPME/Evaluation Consultant	Former Directors the National Evaluation System and evaluator	2
3. DPME	National Programme Manager /Evaluation Commissioner	1
4. Office of the Premier Rural/Urban	Programme Manager/ Evaluation Commissioner	1
Total Number of Respondents		5

### 3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Data from literature document review and interviews was analysed to examine the design of the evaluation standards of the NES. The table 4 below provides and overview on the different phases of data analysis for each research question. The emerging themes were identified during the document review and analysis of interview data for each research question.


**Table 4: Phases of data analysis**

Research questions	First level of Analysis	Second level of Analysis	Third level Analysis
<b>Research question 1:</b> What was the <b>context</b> , rationale, purpose, assumptions and theory of change, key claims and limitations of the in the <b>design</b> of the evaluation standards?	<b>Describe</b> the context, rationale, purpose, assumptions and theory of change, key claims and limitations of the evaluation standards.	<b>Identify and explain</b> the internal consistency, relationships and gaps.	Analyse the design of the South African government evaluation standards in terms of the key claims and limitations.
<b>Research question 2:</b> How does the <b>design</b> of the evaluation standard in the South African National Evaluation System <b>match</b> with international normative frameworks?	<b>Cross – walk analysis</b> of South African National Evaluation System match with evaluation standards from selected international agencies.	Identify <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• similarities,</li> <li>• differences</li> <li>• gaps and silences</li> </ul> In matching evaluation standards of National Evaluation System with from selected international agencies.	Analyse in terms of the contested Issues in the concepts as part of the theoretical framework and paradigmatic orientation.
<b>Research question 3:</b> How does the <b>design</b> of the Evaluation Quality Assessment Tool <b>align</b> to the evaluation standards?	Describe the key components of the <b>Evaluation</b> Quality Assessment Tool.	Compare the Evaluation Quality Assessment Tool to evaluation standards.	Analyse the design of EQAT in terms of the different paradigmatic orientation.
<b>Research question 4:</b> What are the <b>theoretical frameworks</b> underpinning the <b>design</b> South African government evaluation standards?	Analyse the design of the South African government evaluation standards in terms of the different paradigmatic orientation.		

### **3.7.1 Data analysis in relation to research questions**

Firstly, in relation to research question 1, the design of the South African National Evaluation Standards will be described in terms of the context, rationale, purpose, assumptions and theory of change, key claims and limitations. In the second layer of analysis the key components of the evaluation standards in the South African National Evaluation System will be analysed to determine its key areas, internal consistency, relationships and gaps.

For data analysis on research question 2 the components national standards and international evaluation standards will be mapped out against the key evaluation concepts derived from review of literature. That will be the first process to be undertaken. Secondly, the analysis will identify similarities and disconnections in the cross-walk analysis of the NES evaluation standards with selected international standards. Thirdly, the focus will be the analyses of the key emerging issues from the cross walk. This will be analysed against theoretical framework and paradigmatic orientation.



For research question 3, the first layer of analysis will describe the key components of the Evaluation Quality Assessment Tool. The second layer of analysis will compare the Evaluation Quality Assessment Tool to evaluation standards. The third layer of analysis will examine the design of EQAT in terms of the different paradigmatic orientation.

In relation to research question 4 the analysis will first examine the theoretical framework underpinning the design of the South African government evaluation standards in terms of the different paradigmatic orientation- positivist; post positivist; constructivism, critical transformative, and pragmatist orientations. Secondly the focus will be on analysing theoretical framework to analyse the South African government evaluation standards using the key component – purpose; objective, criteria, approaches, designs, and methodology and methods.

### **3.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND REMEDIAL ACTIONS**

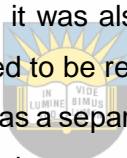
Though the research study aims to conduct a comprehensive investigation of the design of the evaluation standards of the NES, the findings may not be generalizable to all international frameworks on evaluation standards, as each has its own strengths and limitations. However,



this may apply to guidelines that share similar context and experiences. The findings can also trigger interest to pursue further research to strengthen evaluation standards within the discipline. To address this limitations and risks associated with limiting the assessment of evaluation standards to the NES, additional forms of data collection were applied. This was undertaken to ensure sufficient and relevant information was solicited to draw credible analysis and findings to inform the review of evaluation standards.

Although all of the interviewees selected for sampling was informed by their range of experience and critical role played in the design and application of evaluation standards, it was established that one of the key players was not part of the design of the system, as it was thought. This led to the interviewee highlighting that the first few questions that focuses on the design of the system wouldn't be responded to.

The interview instrument was indicated to be a bit long by some of the respondents Based on responses I received during the study, it was also apparent that there was some confusion with some of the questions that sounded to be repeated. For an example, the rational for the National Evaluation System was asked as a separate question from 'key intentions and claims' of the system. It was argued that intentions are already covered in the previous responses provided.



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For ease of reference for interviewees the table of the evaluation standards was attached with the questionnaire. Another observation was that this could have aided as calibration purpose, leaving the respondents with a reminder as well as a shared understanding of measurements on these standards. It is therefore possible that this could have resulted in the detailed information on responses which could have not been the case if the outline of the standards was not provided. Again, since the participants responded to the interview at their own time, (which could be more or less than the actual period scheduled in the interview sheet), this could have resulted in extensive responses observed in some of the questions. Deriving concise themes for these long responses was a bit challenging, hence a brief summary was just provided as an overview of critical information that was emerging.

### **3.9 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY**

The use of multiple research instruments, which included literature reviews, document review, and interviews provided different sources of evidence. This evidence was identified sufficient triangulate data to test robustness, validity and reliability.

### **3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Noting the ethical considerations needed to be adhered to, as this research will encompass collection of data from interviewees, the researcher will be committed to ensure participants have the right to privacy and confidentiality. This will be applied by meaningfully detailing what the research is all about, the right of participants to participate, and the level to which confidentiality will be maintained and the extent to which data will be used. Anonymization of datasets will be another approach to ensure privacy of participants. However, to validate representation of the identified categories outlined in the sample, cross referencing of the names of the department/institutions and the designation of interviewees will still be kept. To manage confidentiality on data solicited, management of data collected will be committed to access being limited to researcher, supervisor and those who will need to use the information for reviewing the evaluation standards. For reporting on complex or controversial issues that might be shared on the NES evaluation standards, the data will be documented with caution, with primary intention to add value to the evaluation discourse.

### **3.11 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The chapter discussed the research method and design. This study used a qualitative research approach. The researcher described how adaptive methodological changes were made in the context of COVID-19. The research instruments used in the research included document review, literature reviews, interviews to collect data. The population and sample size were described. The different layers of data analysis were tabulated and explained for each research question. The chapter finally explained the limitations of the study and remedial actions, reliability and validity including ethical consideration. The next chapter deals with the analysis of data to address the main research questions.

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## CHAPTER 4

### PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

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#### 4 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the research methodology for the study which included the use of qualitative research method, the data collection approach and the analysis process were discussed.

This chapter presents the data analysis and findings of the research study. This chapter is organised around addressing the following key research questions:

- Research Question 1: What is the **context, rationale, purpose**, assumptions and theory of change, key claims and limitations of the South African Evaluation Standards
- Research Question 2: How does the design of the evaluation standard in the South African National Evaluation System **match** with **international normative frameworks**?
- Research Question 3: How does the design of the **Evaluation Quality Assessment Tool align** to the evaluation standards?
- Research Question 4: What are the **theoretical frameworks** underpinning the design South African government evaluation standards?

Description of data sampling as provided in chapter 3 comprised of the following respondents:

Name of department/ agency	Responsible official	Number of respondents
1. DPME	Former Head of the National Evaluation System	1
2. DPME/Evaluation Consultant	Former Directors the National Evaluation System and evaluator	2
3. DPME	National Programme Manager /Evaluation Commissioner	1
4. Office of the Premier Rural/Urban	Programme Manager/ Evaluation Commissioner	1
Total Number of Respondents		5

To address each research questions, the section below will present the analysis of data from document review and interviews.

#### 4.1 THE CONTEXT, RATIONALE, AND PURPOSE, ASSUMPTIONS AND THEORY OF CHANGE, KEY CLAIMS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN EVALUATION STANDARDS.

##### 4.1.1 The national evaluation standards in the context of the National Evaluation System

The Department of Planning Monitoring and evaluation (DPME) developed the NEPF primarily to advance the four main purposes of evaluation which are described to focus on:

- Improving policy or programme performance (evaluation for continuous improvement). This also aims to provide feedback to programme managers.
- Evaluation for improving accountability (to assess where public spending is going, and whether this spending making a difference).
- Improving decision-making e.g. (to evaluate whether the intervention should be continued, how it should be implemented or improved, and whether the budget allocated needs to be increased or reduced)

- Evaluation for generating knowledge (for learning): increasing knowledge about what works and what does not with regards to a public policy, programme, function or organisation.

At the centre of implementation of the NEPF was a need to develop the evaluation standards related Evaluation Quality Assessment Tool which aimed to assess, manage and improve the quality of evaluation in the NES. In the context National Evaluation System, the national evaluation standards guideline is one of the key components of the system.

The findings from document review of the National Evaluation Policy Framework including that from the interviews highlight that the design of the evaluation standards was one of the features that aimed to support the implementation of the National Evaluation Policy Framework. and also, to manage the quality of evaluations. According to document review of the NEPF, the context behind the development of the evaluation standards was articulated as follows:

*‘One of the ways to assure quality, particularly when there is limited capacity, is to avoid reinventing tools. DPME will issue specific guidance notes and guidelines setting standards for evaluation to complement this Framework’ (DPME: 2011, page viii)’.*

  
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Similar observation and understanding on the question was confirmed by most respondents, indicating the following statements:

*‘The evaluation standards were developed at roughly following development of the original National Evaluation Policy Framework. They very much are derived from them’ (Respondent 1, 27 October 2020).*

*‘The standards serve to underpinned the NES principles...’ (Respondent 2, 07 November 2020).*

#### **4.1.2 Rationale and purpose that informed the development of these evaluation standards.**

In the formative years of DPME, the department established Government Wide National Planning and Monitoring Systems. There was a policy gap as the DPME did not have a National Evaluation System. Despite this gap, it should be noted that there were Government Departments that have conducted evaluation of their programmes without a standardised system to guide their design and manage the quality of their evaluation reports. One

respondent painted a clear picture of the rationale for the policy intervention in the form of the NEPF as follows:

*‘...evaluations were done sporadically, unstructured, lack coherence and did not comply to the evaluation theories and best practices... evaluation capability in government needed to be developed. All evaluations should add value of judgement to the performance environment and that value must be within a guiding framework’* (Respondent 2, 07 November 2020).

The document review of the South African government evaluation standards indicates that the purpose of evaluation standards was to set benchmarks for evaluation quality during commissioning and /or conducting evaluation of government in the national evaluation system.

#### **4.1.3 Theory of Change behind the introduction of evaluation standards.**

The theory of change (T)C) will be used as a conceptual tool to clarify how the evaluation standard as part of the NES activities will contribute to a series of results that lead to the intended outcome or impact.



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A robust TOC needs to be structurally sound and have a causal theory to articulate how, the organisation expects results to be achieved The pathway of results is described as follows: ‘If the given (activities) are executed with [inputs] to produce [outputs], that should lead to [outcomes] and eventually contribute to specific [goals] (Befani and Mayne, 2014).

From the desktop review of the NEPF and evaluation standards it was noted that theory of change was not explicitly stated. The NEPF nor the evaluation standards policy did not show how the application of the use of standards would eventually yield the intended goal, which was to improve the quality of evaluation process and product. Stakeholder consultation seemed to have been not thoroughly undertaken for evaluation standards to articulate TOC.

This analysis above resonated with the response provided to this question by respondent who articulated the following statements:

*‘I don’t think there was ever a theory of change specifically for evaluation standards’.* (Respondent 5, 10 November 2020).


The respondent elicited that there was no clear articulation on theory of change. The interviewee further argued that there was no common understanding in the processes that followed the design of evaluation standards to demonstrate how the development of these standards would lead to specific change articulated in the NEPF.

The inference that can be drawn from the contributions of these respondent is that the design of the evaluation standards did not allow a robust and solid basis for developing a TOC.

#### **4.1.4 Assumptions in developing the evaluation standards of the NES**

In research studies, assumptions are understood to be aspects in the external environment of a program/intervention which are then regarded as 'preconditions' for achieving predicted outcomes. Ling (2012) argues that assumptions should respond to the 'uncertainties and emerging results' related to the TOC.

Based on the document review of the NEPF and evaluation standards, the following assumptions were deduced:

- 
- The evaluation standards would be used by Evaluation Steering Committees to provide leadership and oversight to evaluation teams;
  - The evaluation standards will be used by evaluation managers to manage the evaluation process and the quality of reports;
  - The evaluation standards will be used by evaluators to meet the minimum quality standard to conduct the evaluation and write the evaluation report, and,
  - The evaluation reports will be 'used' by different stakeholders.

#### **4.1.5 Key policy claims of the evaluation standard in the South African National Evaluation System**

The policy claims describe the Standards for evaluation in government under the seven thematic areas which cuts across the four phases of evaluation, (DPME 2014). The Evaluation Standards in the NES will be described in the next sub-sections.

#### **4.1.5.1 Overarching considerations of Evaluation Standards**

When undertaking an evaluation, the following overarching considerations should be given attention throughout the process:

- Partnership approach to increase ownership of the evaluation, build accountability and strengthen the use of evaluation.
- Free and open evaluation process that is transparent and self-regulatory from programme management and policy-making, to improve credibility.
- Ethical conduct that is in compliance with the following principles by evaluators, programme managers, M&E advisors; honesty, integrity, and consideration and respect of human rights such as ethnicity, gender roles, sexual orientation, and language. Ethical conduct should further cover the principle of anonymity and confidentiality of individual informants.
- Evaluation process that should be aligned to policy context and background literature.
- The evaluation process that should incorporate support and transfer of capacity development to improve evaluation knowledge and skills,
- Quality control which has to be carried out throughout the evaluation process with the peer review being undertaken as a methodology during the inception phase and during the evaluation. An evaluation quality assessment (EQA) would also need to be executed to draw out lessons for future evaluations.
- Project management of the evaluation should be carried out efficiently and effectively, within the allocated budget and timelines by the evaluation manager, under the oversight of the Evaluation Steering Committee.

#### **4.1.5.2 The four phases of evaluation and related standards**

Phase 1: Planning, Design and Inception –the standards for this phase are described to include the following:

- Evaluation that is informed by a clear TOR that covers the purpose, objectives, scope and methodology of the evaluation;
- The feasibility of the evaluability should be assessed before the evaluation is approved.
- Evaluation should be sufficiently resourced in terms of funds, staff and skills.
- Relevant stakeholder involvement in the evaluation process should be considered. This should be managed through governance and management structures established in the form of Evaluation Steering Committee to provide oversight on the quality of the evaluation process.



- Selection of evaluation service provider needs to be implemented in line with the supply chain process that is effective and transparent.
- The process should incorporate the Inception phase report in which the Terms of Reference will be refined and approved by the Evaluation Steering Committee.

Phase 2: Implementation: standards are described below:

- Evaluator independence is required to ensure impartiality and credibility in conducting the evaluation.
- There should be key stakeholder involvement in the evaluation process.
- Ethical considerations should be adhered, and this should be applied by protecting the rights of evaluation participants,
- Evaluation should be implemented within the allocated time and budget

Phase 3: Reporting: This phase covers the following standards:

- Intermediate reports that should include: final data collection instruments and other tools; analysis plan; other technical or process reports. These need to be given to the Evaluation Steering Committee.
- Writing and presentation of draft and final evaluation reports should be produced, and this should cover the full detail of the evaluation.
- The 1/5/25 report format should be followed to produce different evaluation reports that are understood by the intended audience.
- The use of figures and tables should support the comprehension of results.
- Coverage of the report should include evaluation questions that are answered. This report should further cover the context of the development intervention, intervention logic, explanation of the methodology used; clarity of analysis of conclusions; acknowledgement of changes and limitations of the evaluation, validity and reliability of information sources, acknowledgement of disagreements within the evaluation team, incorporation of stakeholders' comments.

Phase 4: Follow-up, use and learning: standards in this thematic area are described below:

- Timeliness, relevance and use of the evaluation.
- Systematic response to and follow-up on recommendations.
- Dissemination of evaluation results, storage and management of the evaluation reports should be ensured to provide easy access to all stakeholders.
- Reflection on the evaluation process and product should be undertaken to highlight what worked well and what could have been strengthened in the evaluation.

Based on the observations from the guidelines and interviews, the following key claims of the evaluation standards are described below:

The first claim highlighted that the evaluation standards will be used for different purposes by diverse audience.

The Evaluation Steering Committee will use the national standards for oversight to the evaluation team. A claim that Evaluation managers will use the standards to manage the 4 phases of the evaluation process. Evaluators to use the national standards to guide the plan, conduct and write the evaluation report. Another claim was that the Assessors will use the evaluation standards to rate the different assessment criteria of the evaluation done.

The second claim related to the fact that the policy would enable standardised approach in managing and conducting evaluations.

The policy claim inferred that the evaluation standards will enable DPME as custodian of the NES to standardise the approach in managing; planning, conducting, reporting and using evaluations across government to assure the quality of evaluation process.

In supporting the statement, the interviewee expressed that:

*'The establishment of evaluation guidelines will enable evaluations to be done in a standardised manner across institutions. Guidelines would enable one to conduct evaluations'* (Respondent 3, 9 November 2020.)

The third claim inferred that the policy would assure the quality of government evaluation. This claim was supported by one respondent who highlighted that evaluation standards assured the quality of evaluation report. In expressing these views, this is what was stated:

*'...we are able to assess the quality/credibility of evaluations'.*  
(Respondent 1, 27 October 2020).

*'That any evaluation with a score of 3 and above, meant that the evaluation capability exists and that the evidence is useful, credible and reliable and that gaps can be attended to'* (Respondent 2, 7 November 2020).

#### 4.1.6 Limitations on the design of evaluation standard in the South African National Evaluation System.

The first limitation related to the lack of capacity at the systemic level to manage the design of the national evaluations. The observations on inadequate capacity was highlighted by one respondent:

*'I guess the limitations of the evaluation standards are that they have been put together by people that did not necessarily actually undertake many evaluations before they were appointed as evaluation specialists in the DPME. This has led to some glaring weaknesses in some cases, where for example, certain evaluations or evaluation instruments have been developed and approved that actually make little sense upon close examination'* (Respondent 3, 09 November 2020).

Another responded indicated the dependence by DPME management on external service providers to be among the challenges in the design of standards:

*'It is designed and informed by a limited number of existing internal standards (think DAC) and outsourced to a service provider'* (Respondent 4, 9 November 2020).



The second limitation related to absence of a clear theory of change which is observed through lack of realistic set of assumptions that guided the design of the national evaluation standards. The assumptions that were not clearly stated in the national evaluation policy concealed the requisite human resource capacity (number and levels of competence); and budget to DPME and government departments by National Treasury to execute activities and outputs to institutionalise the NES. This was exacerbated by unrealistic timeframes on implementation including lack of organisational culture in government departments for designing, conducting and using of evaluation for decisions making.

The third limitation related to the lack of clarity on the definition of each evaluation standards and its relationship with the indicators described. The conceptual definition of evaluation standards was not clearly and consistently defined across the document. These design errors had the risk of negatively impacting on the application of the evaluation standards to manage and quality assure government evaluations.

## **4.2 CROSS-WALK ANALYSIS ON THE DESIGN OF THE EVALUATION STANDARDS ON THE NATIONAL EVALUATION SYSTEM WITH SELECTED INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS**

This section aims to present a cross walk analysis of the National Evaluation Standards with selected international standards. The section is further intended to benchmark on the design of the national evaluation standards by identifying the similarities, difference and gaps among these guiding frameworks. The analysis further looked at examining the contested issues identified in the empirical literature.

### **4.2.1 Motivation for the selection of the international evaluation standards frameworks**

The following 5 international evaluation standards framework were chosen based on the following reasons.

- Economic and Corporation Development (OECD) DAC evaluation criteria 1994 and the DAC Quality Standards for Development Evaluation (2010) was selected as one of the measuring instruments for South African National Evaluation System given its influence on the global national evaluation systems.
- ASEAN Regional Framework on Evaluation Standards (ARFES) which was a regional guideline to ASEAN member countries headed by Malaysian Evaluation Society (MES) was selected due to it being a relative new framework for ASEAN countries. It was also selected due to it having similar development challenges comparable for South Africa evaluation system
- American Evaluation Association (AEA) Evaluator Ethical Guidelines (2018) was selected as it is one of the most established frameworks. These ethical principles were therefore selected given their robustness and rigor in describing standards for evaluation processes.
- The African Evaluation Guidelines-AfrEA (2018): This evaluation standard framework was selected to contextualise the national standards and validate the African context.

### **4.2.2 Cross walk analysis**


The following concepts will be used for cross walk analysis: 1) ethical aspects, 2) competence and capacity, 3) quality of evaluation, 4) accountability, 5) utility, 6) equity ,7) efficiency and relevance, 8) effectiveness, 9) impact and 10) sustainability. These concepts have been fully explained in Chapter 2, subsection 2.1.4.

The Table 5 below illustrates the evaluation standards in relation to each concept across NES and the selected international frameworks.

**Table 5: Cross walk analysis of the SA NES with selected international standards**

Concepts	Standards for evaluation in government (2014)	OECD-DAC Quality Standards for Development Evaluation (2010)	ASEAN (ARFES) 2015	AEA-Evaluators Ethical Guidelines (2018)	AfrEA 2018
Ethics	Ethical conduct guides adherence to principles of <b>integrity, honesty</b> , anonymity and confidentiality of individual informants, consideration and respect of human rights such as ethnicity, gender roles, sexual orientation, and language.	Promotes relevant professional and ethical guidelines and codes of conduct for evaluators. Evaluation is undertaken with <b>integrity and honesty</b> .	Ethics, the discipline of rights, morals, and principles that <b>guide individual behaviour</b> .	The core values of the (AEA) are intended as a guide to the <b>professional ethical conduct of evaluators</b> .	Ethics encompasses: the ability of evaluation to respond to the information needs of all target stakeholder, quality of reports in terms of identifying and addressing weaknesses, agreements and manage ethical rules.
Competence and capacity	Improving evaluation knowledge and skills, strengthening evaluation management, stimulating demand for and use of evaluation findings, and supporting an environment of	Evaluation process should maximise evaluation capacity of development partners by improving evaluation knowledge and skills.	Competencies cover the qualifications, skills, technical skills and knowledge, relevant experience and attributes required,	'Evaluator Credibility': Evaluations should be executed by qualified people who can maintain credibility in the evaluation field.	Credibility of the evaluator should reflect cultural sensitivity, appropriate communication skills and proven competence in

Concepts	Standards for evaluation in government (2014)	OECD-DAC Quality Standards for Development Evaluation (2010)	ASEAN (ARFES) 2015	AEA-Evaluators Ethical Guidelines (2018)	AfrEA 2018
	accountability and learning'.		and relevant subject matter experts for those employed within the evaluation.		evaluation methodology.
Quality of evaluation	Quality as measures to ensure that the approaches employed in evaluation are consistent with those intended.	Quality is advocated through the 'DAC Quality Standards for Development Evaluation' which provides a guide to good practice in development evaluation.	Quality of ARFES is anchored through the 3 interconnecting core elements which include Evaluation Management, Evaluation Conduct and Evaluation Utilisation.	Quality evaluations is advocated through the 'accuracy standards', which are intended to intensify reliable information and honesty of evaluation processes.	The principle of quality requires that data collection and analysis methods in evaluation determine information relevance, validity and reliability.
Accountability	Findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons are clear, relevant, targeted and actionable so that the evaluation can be used to achieve its intended learning and accountability objectives Improvement plan is tracked to ensure accountability for implementation.	Focuses on fiscal obligation, the evaluator's allocation and expenditure of resources should reflect sound accountability procedures.	Utilization of evaluation should be the driving force for accountability and transparency.	Through the evaluation accountability standards, the guide encourages sufficient documentation of evaluations and a meta-evaluative focus being on improvement and accountability.	The guidelines strive to increase coherence, transparency and efficiency in generating and using evaluative evidence for institutional and organizational

Concepts	Standards for evaluation in government (2014)	OECD-DAC Quality Standards for Development Evaluation (2010)	ASEAN (ARFES) 2015	AEA-Evaluators Ethical Guidelines (2018)	AfrEA 2018
					learning and accountability.
Utility	The evaluation is delivered in time to ensure optimal use of the results. There is also a requirement for management to follow-up on recommendations.	Evaluations should be conducted, and reported to encourage follow-up and use by stakeholders.	Use of evaluation should be regarded as a way to obtain valuable lessons for improved programme/project performance.	Emphasis on evaluators to ensure evaluation information anchors on the requirement to serve the needs of stakeholders.	Evidence is owned by stakeholders.
Equity	The guide requires that gender balance is considered in the selection of the service provider. In addition to this, the standard relating to ethics highlights that evaluation process should be accommodative of gender roles, race, age, sexual orientation and language.	 X	X	AEA Evaluators' Ethical Guiding Principles 2018 encourages Evaluators to strive to embrace advancement for equitable and just society.	X
Efficiency and relevance	Overarching considerations: subsection par 1.7 indicates that the entire evaluation process should be carried out efficiently, effectively,	Specific objectives of the evaluation should clarify the evaluation aims in terms of the effectiveness,	Use of evaluation findings to enable justification or evidence to seek additional provision for financial and	The guideline highlights that relevant evaluation information should serve the identified and emergent.	Efficiency is captured under utility which is a principle that aims to ensure that evaluation leads to

Concepts	Standards for evaluation in government (2014)	OECD-DAC Quality Standards for Development Evaluation (2010)	ASEAN (ARFES) 2015	AEA-Evaluators Ethical Guidelines (2018)	AfrEA 2018
	timeously and within resource allocation.	efficiency, relevance and sustainability.	human resource to continue an existing programme or projects.	needs of stakeholders.	technically relevant data that can demonstrate the efficiency of the project evaluated.
Effectiveness	One of the evaluation criteria in the NEPF is to measure effectiveness.	Its purpose is to increase the effectiveness of international development programmes by supporting robust, informed and independent evaluation.	Focuses on policy compliance: For evaluation management to be effective, it needs to comply with prevailing relevant regulatory effective evaluation function.	Cost effectiveness evaluation needs to be efficient and provide information of adequate value to justify resources used.	Evaluation should empower stakeholders, creates ownership and increase the chances that the findings will be used for effective development.
Impact	One of the evaluation criteria in the NEPF is to measure impact.	Impact if one of the specific objectives of the evaluation which is also described among the concepts in the OECD evaluation -DAC criteria for evaluating development assistance.	The concept of impact is only reflecting on the glossary of terms where the framework articulates what needs to be incorporated for evaluation design.	Evaluations should be planned, conducted, and reported in ways that encourage follow-through by stakeholders to increase the likelihood that the evaluation will be used.	Under Utility, the guide explains that for Evaluation Impact, evaluations should be disseminated on time to increases the chances that the findings will be used for empowerment



Concepts	Standards for evaluation in government (2014)	OECD-DAC Quality Standards for Development Evaluation (2010)	ASEAN (ARFES) 2015	AEA-Evaluators Ethical Guidelines (2018)	AfrEA 2018
					and development.
Sustainability	One of the evaluation criteria in the NEPF is sustainability.	Sustainability is one of the concept within the DAC criteria for evaluating development assistance:	Evaluations should focus on utility of findings and recommendations to enable possible upscaling and sustainability.	X	Sustainability should be promoted to harmonise capacity building for African Evaluators.

#### 4.2.3 Key issues from cross walk analysis



The following issues emerged in the cross-walk analysis of the National Standards with the international frameworks:

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4.2.3.1 The Economic and Corporation Development (OECD) DAC evaluation criteria were the most dominant international standards framework, that influenced the South African National Evaluation System and other international guidelines.

4.2.3.2 **Ethical Standards:** All of the selected guidelines highlighted commitment to ensure evaluations processes adhere to the ethical standards, but most of these guidelines are found silent in relation to consequence management for the evaluator. In describing the “ethical standard” the South African evaluation standards appeared consistent with the ASEAN- AFREAS (2015) frameworks in addressing the issues of contextual and cultural issues by including the respect of human rights such as ethnicity, gender roles, sexual orientation, and language.

4.2.3.3 **Competence and capacity:** there were consistent understanding and application of the concept across the frameworks. The following gaps that were identified in relation to the standard were that the target group for evaluation capacity needs to be more explicitly stated across all frameworks. There is lack of participation in the evaluation team by subject matter experts from the relevant discipline/project that is being evaluated. This gap on exclusion of subject matter expert in evaluation was visible in

most guidelines (except for ASEAN and ARFES 2015); The frameworks also lacked visible presence relating to transfer of skills for empowerment of communities involved in the evaluation. These frameworks needed to reflect that close relationship between this standard and the competency frameworks.

4.2.3.4 **Quality of Evaluation:** all frameworks have taken broader description of what quality imply in reference to the evaluation standards; this was inferred to as “fitness for purpose”. The “quality” standard cuts across all standards that act as a building blocks for quality evaluations.

4.2.3.5 **Accountability:** all frameworks associated accountability to the use of evaluation results for improvement and learning from system, policy or programme perspective, whilst the OECD/DAC 2010 focussed on evaluator accountability. The accountability and relationships of different key stakeholders in the evaluation process need to be more clearly articulated across all the frameworks.

4.2.3.6 **Utility:** There is a seamless understanding across all framework that the use of evidence in evaluation needs to be responsive to serve the information needs of stakeholders in the evaluation. All the frameworks articulate that there should be the use of evaluation findings and recommendations for programme improvement, decision making and justification of resource allocation. AfrEA 2018, extends the discussion to highlight the importance for evaluation evidence to be ‘owned’ by stakeholders.

4.2.3.7 **Equity:** In comparison with other international agencies that limited this standard to selection of the evaluator. Though the NES puts emphasis on gender balance when selecting an evaluation service provider, the AEA was identified to be most explicit in articulating its commitment to equity. AEA defines equity as ‘the condition of fair and just opportunities for all people to participate and thrive in society regardless of individual or group identity or difference’ (American Evaluation Association 2018). The standard is further denoted as ‘Common Good and Equity’. Through this concept AEA encourages evaluators to use findings for social interventions to express how equitable development responds to the underprivileged communities, and how such interventions reduce inequalities.

4.2.3.8 **Efficiency, relevance and effectiveness:** In executing policies and programmes, the standards of effectiveness, efficiency and relevance are usually pursued together. All frameworks describe the “efficiency” as a standard that assesses how cost-effective are the resources being transformed to results, and “relevance” to be a standard that assesses the level at which the goals of a development intervention relate with the needs of stakeholders. The National Evaluation Standard was identified lacking in linking efficiency standard to measure performance of the intervention and relevance of the

intervention to respond to societal needs. The concept “effectiveness” across the guideline should be broadened to respond to rapidly changing emergency and disruptive situations such as the COVID 19 pandemic that affected all societies across the globe.

**4.2.3.9 Impact and sustainability:** the concept of “impact” was not adequately defined by most frameworks except for the OECD framework that describes impact as a measurement of how the intervention being evaluated result in (intended or unintended) outcomes, (OECD 2010). The framework goes on to explain that for impact to be clearly evaluated, it requires a counterfactual of what those results would have been in the absence of the intervention. There was clear absence of the description and application of the concept “sustainability” across all the frameworks, except for OECD (2010) which describes the concepts as continuation of benefits received from a development intervention even after such intervention has been completed.

#### **4.3 ANALYSIS OF THE ALIGNMENT OF THE DESIGN OF EVALUATION STANDARDS AND THE EVALUATION QUALITY ASSESSMENT TOOL**

This section is intended to examine the alignment of the evaluation standards in relation to the Evaluation Quality Assessment Tool (EQTA).

The analysis on data for this question was based on document review of the DPME Evaluation Guideline No 2.2.19: Guideline on Quality Assessment of Government Evaluations (2017); and Standards for evaluation in government (2014). Further analysis of information was derived from interviews responses.

Evaluation Unit in DPME translated the national evaluation standards into an Evaluation Quality Assessment Tool (EQAT). This tool serves as an instrument intended to provide basic guidance on how to carry out a quality assessment of a government evaluation. The instrument was intended for ‘Quality assessors of government evaluations as well as moderators and administrators of the process’ (DPME 2017: p 1), even though the evaluators including programme staff and M&E advisors were expected to familiarise themselves with it.

The table that follows describes the alignment in terms of key dimension of NES evaluation standards and EQAT. Subsequent to this, will be the analysis on identifying the strengths, similarities and the gaps in the alignment between the evaluation standards and the EQAT.

**Table 6: Alignment between the NES evaluation standards and EQAT criteria**

Standards for Evaluation in Government	Guideline on Quality Assessment of Government Evaluations
<p><b>Purpose:</b></p> <p>Intended to set a benchmark of evaluation quality.</p>	<p><b>Purpose:</b></p> <p>To provide a step-by-step guide on how to undertake a quality assessment of a government evaluation. It further aims to assess gaps to identify technical support required for evaluation practice.</p>
<p><b>Focuses on 4 phases of evaluation</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Planning, Design and Inception</li> <li>2. Implementation</li> <li>3. Report</li> <li>4. Follow-up, use and learning</li> </ol>	<p><b>Focuses on 4 phases of evaluation</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Planning, Design and Inception</li> <li>2. Implementation</li> <li>3. Report</li> <li>4. Follow-up, use and learning</li> </ol>
<p><b>Key elements of the guide</b></p> <p>Each phase provides standards to be assessed in reference to that specific phase. Indicators and weighting for each standard are provided.</p>	<p><b>Key elements of the guide</b></p> <p>The assessment includes examination of the following documentation</p> <p>Terms of Reference (ToR) or evaluation proposal, an inception report, data collection tools or instruments, meeting minutes, presentations conducted during evaluation, and lastly the Final /approved Evaluation Report.</p> <p>In addition to documentation assessed, an Interview Guide is provided to assist the assessor with the interviews conducted with evaluation role-players. These include the programme manager, M&amp;E manager/ advisor, the evaluator(s) and any other relevant evaluation stakeholder such as a representative of the commissioning department.</p>
<p><b>Target:</b></p> <p>Guideline does not provide an overview on who the actual target audience is other than specifying that it aims to support the use of evaluations conducted in the national evaluation system through setting scale for evaluation quality.</p>	<p><b>Target:</b></p> <p>The guide clarifies target as Quality assessors of government evaluations as well as moderators and administrators of the process, programme staff, M&amp;E advisors and evaluators.</p>

Standards for Evaluation in Government				Guideline on Quality Assessment of Government Evaluations											
<b>Ratings</b> The quality assessment indicators for evaluation standards used the weightings from 1 to 10. (each indicator has its weighting), most ranging between 4 and 8 with exception of some standards which ranged between the lowest and highest margins:				<b>Ratings</b> The rating for assessing each standard using the EQAT adopted a Likert-type rating scale, with an interval scale ranging from very poor (1), inadequate (2), adequate (3), good (4) to excellent (5). The EQAT further describes the weighting applied to each phase in the calculation of the final composite indicator as follows:											
Evaluation Phase	Standards	Indicator	Weighting	<table><tr><th>Phase of Evaluation</th><th>Weighting</th></tr><tr><td>1. Planning &amp; Design</td><td>20</td></tr><tr><td>2. Implementation</td><td>20</td></tr><tr><td>3. Report</td><td>40</td></tr><tr><td>4. Follow-up, use and learning</td><td>20</td></tr></table>		Phase of Evaluation	Weighting	1. Planning & Design	20	2. Implementation	20	3. Report	40	4. Follow-up, use and learning	20
Phase of Evaluation	Weighting														
1. Planning & Design	20														
2. Implementation	20														
3. Report	40														
4. Follow-up, use and learning	20														
Planning , Design and Inception	Scope in terms of TOR	The evaluation was guided by : well-structured and complete TOR proposal.	10												
	Stakeholder involvement, governance and management structures	Incorporation of an element of capacity building of partners/staff	2												
Follow-up, use and learning	Systematic response to and follow-up on recommendations	An improvement plan has been developed based on the findings and recommendations	10												
	Reflection on the evaluation process and product	A reflective process has been undertaken by the evaluation steering committee	2												
<b>Clarification of roles and responsibilities</b> The guide did not provide any roles as it was intended to be a criterion set for quality assurance across evaluations. The focus was on provision of detailed description of each standards and related indicator.				<b>Clarification of roles and responsibilities</b> Evaluation role players and their roles are clarified, these include programme manager, M&E manager/ advisor, the evaluator(s) and any other significant evaluation stakeholder, such as a representative of the commissioning department.  In relation to assessment: clarity is provided for the following roles.											

Standards for Evaluation in Government	Guideline on Quality Assessment of Government Evaluations
	Administrators, Assessor, Sector expert and the moderator.  The guides provide a clear process map which illustrates actions taken during the quality assessment process.
<b>Output anticipated when evaluation standards are applied:</b> evaluation report of good quality.	Output anticipated when quality assessment process is undertaken: evaluation assessment report with ratings.

In describing the observations based on interviews relating to the alignment between the Evaluation Standard and EQAT, respondents concurred that there was close alignment between these two documents. In expressing their critical observations on alignment, respondents described their observations as follows:

*'Yes, its essence is to establish if the evaluation standards were adhered to throughout the evaluation process' (Respondent 3, 9 November 2020).*

*'They were taken from the standards to see how each standard could be defined in a more specific way that could be measured. Without checking again, I can't remember if there were gaps. The main gap was that although we specified use, in practice this could not be assessed effectively at the management response stage' (Respondent 1, 27 October 2020).*

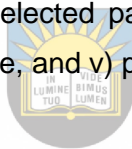
The following observations were made based on the document review on the alignment between the Evaluation Standard and EQAT. Firstly, both documents are clearly aligned in terms of purpose, focus on four areas of evaluation, including key elements that are measured. The second observation; the Evaluation Standards guideline does not mention the target audience, whilst the EQAT is clear about the target audience. Third observation, while the evaluation standards provided description of the indicators that evaluators and managers should consider for each standard, the Quality Assessment tool complemented the process by articulating diverse documentation that are assessed for every evaluation that goes through quality assessment. Fourth observation, the different rating scales were used by the two documents. Both the guidelines were developed with the rating system that

acknowledges 'that not every indicator is of equal significance in the evaluation process' (DPME 2017: p 3). This resulted in both the standards and the EQAT having items that are of different weighting rates based on their comparative importance across the entire evaluation process. Finally, the roles and responsibilities of key role players were not clearly articulated in the Evaluation Standards guideline whilst these were clearly articulated in EQAT.

#### **4.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS UNDERPINNING THE DESIGN OF SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT EVALUATION STANDARDS**

The Vaca (2017) 'framework on periodic table of evaluation', discussed in Chapter 2 will be used to examine the theory that underpins the design of the evaluation standards.

In examining the paradigms that underpin South African evaluation standards, the following thematic areas drawn from Vaca (2017) Periodic Table of Evaluation were used; paradigm', purpose, objectives, criteria, approaches, design, method of data collection. These thematic areas were plotted against the five selected paradigms: i) positivist, ii) post positivist, iii) constructivism, iv) critical transformative, and v) pragmatist.



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##### **4.4.1 Analysis of the theoretical frameworks underpinning the design of the national evaluation standards**

The following critical issues emerged from the analysis.

###### **4.4.1.1 There was no explicit theoretical paradigm that guided the design of the evaluation standards.**

In analysing the Evaluation Standards guideline, it was observed that the policy developers have not consciously being guided by paradigms behind the design of the standards. However, paradigms were found to be implicit in the evaluation standards. This theoretical gap is also evident in most of the international frameworks that the national standards were benchmarked against. This finding concurs with other research observation that there is poor application of paradigms in most research and evaluation studies (Makombe, 2017; Chilisa and Kawulich, 2012; Sefotho, 2015 and Vaca, 2017).



#### **4.4.1.2 There was a strong influence of positivism and post positivism paradigms depicted on 'process' and 'result' orientation of the South African Evaluation Standards.**

In examining the implicit paradigm that underpins the national standards, it was found that the national standards have a positivist and post positivist orientation. According to table on 'Paradigm Evolution in Evaluation' by Vaca (2013), positivist paradigmatic orientation is characterised by instances where 'process and product' are central features. Positivists believe that strict observance and adherence to methodological rules, which they consider to result in objective truth. The evaluator becomes the observer whose primary role is to recognize and appreciate casual relationships among factors, and make generalisations, judgements and predictions.

The national standards focussed on managing the 'processes' of evaluation, and the "product" of the evaluation. The standards implicitly promoted a philosophical belief that adheres to the 'factual' information that is acquired through measurements and observation.

#### **4.4.1.3 The evaluation standards did not demonstrate influence of the paradigm on evaluation process**



The national evaluation standards do not articulate how specific paradigm of the commissioner, evaluator or the evaluation team may influence methodological approaches, evaluation design, methods including choices related to evaluation purpose, objectives, criteria, approaches, design, method of data collection. The evaluation standard failed to include how evaluation managers and evaluator's philosophical orientation affect their philosophical assumptions in responding to the following questions:

- a. The ontological question: What is the evaluation team (commissioner, evaluation manager and evaluator) views about the form and nature of reality?
- b. The epistemological question: What is the relationship between the evaluation teams (would be knower) and that which can be known about the reality?
- c. The methodological question: How can the evaluation team go about attempting to know that which can be known about the reality?
- d. The paradigm question: How does paradigm of the evaluation team influence the evaluation roles in planning phase, implementation phase and post evaluation phase.



According to Chilisa and Kawulich (2012) a specific paradigm may follow particular methodologies. For instance, positivistic paradigm normally adopts a quantitative methodology, while a constructivist or interpretative paradigm usually utilizes a qualitative methodology. Both O’Gorman and MacIntosh: (2015) and Chilisa and Kawulich (2012) agree that these inferred pathways are not necessarily static. The poor application of paradigmatic approach in national evaluation standards conceals the transparency of the evaluator’s paradigm or world view.

#### **4.4.1.4 The national standards did not adequately address contextual issues of human rights, equity and social justice.**

In relation to reflections on the adequacy of Vaca’s taxonomy as a theoretical model, it was found that Vaca’s model was silent on contextual and ‘cultural’ sensitivity. In response to this observation as researcher of the study, this category is proposed to be included to Vaca’s model.

The national evaluation standards did not respond to the contextual realities. The cross-walk analysis also revealed gaps in evaluation standards appropriated internationally as examined across the five frameworks; specifically, in addressing contextual issues of human rights, gender equity and social justice. Mbaya (2019) argues that the borrowed theoretical approaches that are implemented in the evaluation of programs within African settings provide an inadequate insight into Africa’s values, beliefs and changing cultures. A similar observation is argued by Bhambra (2014) cited in Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017) who highlights a critical epistemological argument on this matter. The author asserts that our historical background, which is defined by the past and present, moulds our thinking pattern, and even how we engage.

There have been lots of debates recently in the continent for evaluation discipline and practice to be more inclusive and responsive to contextual realities. Cloete (2016), asserts that evaluations cannot be approached using one-size fit all kind of approach that only advocates the Western ideologies and criteria. In response to this, Cloete proposed an Africa-rooted programme evaluation management theory. Sibanda, the former President of AfrEA, in her engagement through Independent Development Evaluation (IDEV) (2019) during the 9th AfrEA International Conference asserts that each evaluator should acknowledge and appreciate a paradigm that expresses priorities and needs of those whose knowledge systems have been disregarded. This discussion subsequently led to the idea to support what is

referred to as 'Evaluation Made in Africa' which is a concept that pursues to recognize and develop an exclusively African approach to evaluation. The guiding principles and standards for evaluations needs to foster articulation of local values, assumptions, and practices.

#### **4.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

This chapters responded to the key research questions. The design of the Evaluation Standards as a component of the South African National Evaluation System was clear about its context, rationale, purpose and claims to manage and promote evaluation quality, even though there were few limitations. The cross – walk analysis on evaluation standards of South African National Evaluation System against four selected international evaluation standards guidelines has shown that most National Standards are consistent with international benchmarks. There were only few areas where in some guideline's description and reference of some standards were not articulated There were significantly high levels of alignment between evaluation standard and the EQAT. Both documents managed to provide descriptive narrative on how they can be applied to ensure quality assurance and assessment of the evaluation processes to validate if the final product of the evaluation (evaluation report) meets the expected quality.



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The key issue that emerged in using Vaca (2017) 'framework on periodic table of evaluation and Paradigm Evolution in Evaluation' by Vaca (2013) to analyse the standards, highlighted lack of the national evaluation standards in advocating reference and influence of the paradigm on methodological approaches, evaluation designs and methods in evaluation process.

The next chapter will summarise the previous chapters, present the discussion of the research findings and recommendations, and make the final concluding remarks.

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## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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#### 5. INTRODUCTION

This concluding chapter will first summarise the key issues in previous chapters; secondly, it will identify and explain the research findings based on the analysis of data to the research questions, and refer to similar and different findings in literature review. Thirdly, the chapter will make recommendations; and also provide the final concluding remarks.

##### 5.1 SUMMARY OF THE KEY ISSUES IN PREVIOUS CHAPTERS

This section will summarise the key issues from the previous chapters.

Chapter 1 provided the contextual basis of the study by setting a scene with specific reference to the development of evaluation standards within South African National Evaluation System. Evaluation standards and quality assessment frameworks were developed within the broader context of an established National Evaluation Policy Framework. The purpose of this research was to analyse the design of evaluation standards of the National Evaluation System. The chapter further highlighted the justification and delimitations of the study, with a detailed chapter layout being the final subsection of the chapter.

Chapter 2 reviewed literature on development of evaluation standards within the evaluation discipline. Key issues explored in this regard covered the debates on the global perspective on professionalising evaluation with specific focus on evaluation standards and the role of 'standards' in evaluation discourse. This section further covered the global evaluation standards and approaches, and how such approach impacted on the implementation of the system. The chapter also reflected on literature related to the need for transformation of western models on evaluation approaches within African Context. This section further dealt with key concepts that guided the design of evaluation standards and also the theoretical basis which was informed by Vaca's 'periodic table of evaluation'. The chapter concluded by presenting the conceptual framework of the study.

Chapter 3 discussed the research methodology. A qualitative method was identified to be the most appropriate method for this investigative and exploratory study. In order to respond to research questions, data collection methods included literature review, document review and interviews. The document review looked into the guideline on Standards for Evaluation in Government (2014), National Evaluation Policy Framework (NEPF) (2011) DPME Evaluation Guideline No 2.2.19: Guideline on Quality Assessment of Government Evaluations (2017).

Chapter 4 focused on presenting analysis of the data on this study. This chapter responded to the key research questions which looked at the; i) the context, rationale, and purpose on design of the Evaluation Standards as a component of the South African National Evaluation System; ii) the cross – walk analysis on evaluation standards of South African National Evaluation System against four selected international evaluation standards guidelines; iii) the analysis of the alignment between evaluation standard and the EQAT; iv) and finally using Vaca (2017) 'framework on periodic table of evaluation to analyse the influence of the paradigm on the design of the national standards.



## 5.2 DISCUSSION ON RESEARCH KEY FINDINGS

This section will present the key findings based on the presentation of analysis in response to the key research questions.

- **The design of the national evaluation standards was technically and conceptually clear**

The design of the national evaluation standards as a component of the South African National Evaluation System was technically and conceptually clear about its context, rationale, purpose and its claims to manage the evaluation process to promote evaluation quality.

The design of the national evaluation standards was one of the components of the National Evaluation System that aimed to support the implementation of the National Evaluation Policy Framework. The standards were intended to guide the management of quality of the evaluation process and product. The national evaluation standards were designed using a clear organising framework distributed over the four phases of the evaluation process - Phase 1: planning, design and inception; Phase 2: implementation; Phase 3: reporting; Phase 4

follow-up, use and learning. Evaluation standards were developed to play a critical role in guiding and assessing the quality of an evaluation when planning and managing an evaluation.

- **Technical limitations in the design of the National Evaluation Standards.**

The following design errors were identified in the design of the national evaluation standards in the National Evaluation System. Firstly, there was a lack of capacity at the systemic level to manage the design of the national evaluations. Secondly, there was no clear theory of change and realistic set of assumptions that guided the design of the national evaluation standards. At the design phase the inputs in relation to human resource capacity, budget and time for managing the change management and institutionalisation process of implementing the standards to manage the evaluation process were underestimated. Thirdly, there was a lack of clarity on the definition of each evaluation standard and its relationship with the indicators. The conceptual definitions of evaluation standards were not clearly and consistently defined across the document. These design errors had the risk of negatively impacting on the application of the evaluation standards to manage and quality assure government evaluations.



- **Inadequate articulation of national evaluation standards on development and transformative issues.**

Although most national evaluation standards were consistent with international frameworks, both national and international standards did not adequately address the development and transformative issues such as equity, diversity and inclusion.

The cross – walk analysis on evaluation standards of South African National Evaluation System against four selected international evaluation standards guidelines has shown that most National Standards are consistent with international benchmarks. Most notable, the standards related to ethics, competence and capacity quality of evaluation, accountability, utility.

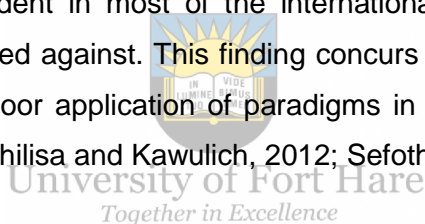
The Economic and Corporation Development (OECD) DAC evaluation criteria was the most dominant international standards framework that influenced the South African National Evaluation System and other international guidelines. However, the concepts of equity, diversity and inclusion were not explicitly embedded and defined in the National Standards and in most of the international standards frameworks (except for the American Evaluation

Association 2018). AEA encourages evaluators to use findings for social interventions to express how equitable development responds to the underprivileged communities, or how such interventions reduce inequalities.

Genesis Analytics report on evaluating South Africa's National Evaluation System highlighted similar finding in assessing the performance of the NES system. The report expressed that the NES failed to adequately address issues of equity, inclusiveness, gender equality that drive transformative agenda. Leslie et. al. (2015) and Podems (2014) provided similar evidence with regard to NES and related standards, by stating that NES could not reflect nor cement the 'developmental' position the system intended to uphold.

- **No explicit paradigm and theory behind the design of evaluation standards**

The policy developers did not consciously guide on the paradigms behind the design of the evaluation standards. The national evaluation standards did not explicitly show the influence of the paradigm on methodological approaches, evaluation designs and methods. This theoretical gap is also evident in most of the international frameworks that the national standards were benchmarked against. This finding concurs with other research observation which attest that there is poor application of paradigms in most evaluation and evaluation studies (Makombe, 2017; Chilisa and Kawulich, 2012; Sefotho, 2015 and Vaca, 2017).



### **5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations are made in line with the research findings.

- The evaluation management team at DPME need to address the technical and conceptual design errors of the national evaluation standards.
- At the systemic level the design of the standards should be underpinned by clearly articulated theory of change with realistic set of assumptions, to address issues of human resource capacity, budget, timeframes and change management process to institutionalise the standards in government departments.
- The design of national evaluation standards and EQAT should be context-sensitive and address the development and transformative issues such as equity, diversity and inclusion.
- The design of the evaluation standards and EQAT should appropriate the discourse of the paradigms to demonstrate how the philosophical beliefs and orientation of the evaluation stakeholders (members of the steering committee, commissioners and

evaluators) influence the purpose and objectives of the evaluation, methodological approaches, evaluation designs and methods; and value judgements they make in the evaluation report.

#### **5.4. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

This research responded to the conceptual gap in existing research in the evaluation discourse on how the design of the evaluation standards promotes evaluation quality and use.

This research study analysed the design of evaluation standards in the South African National Evaluation System (NES). The study has shown that the national evaluation standards are technically and conceptually robust, however with a few limitations. The research study encourages review of national and international evaluation standard frameworks and the assessment instruments to address the development and transformative issues.



The absence of discourse of paradigm in the design of the national evaluation standards was also identified to be a critical aspect that needs to be looked into. Despite this gap, there was positivistic orientation in implicit design of the standards. The study proposes a need for a strong philosophical and theoretical orientation in the design of the National Evaluation System and the Evaluation Standards. The study has demonstrated the critical role played by national evaluation standards as part of the National Evaluation System in guiding and assessing the quality of an evaluation when planning and managing an evaluation.

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## APPENDIX 1: ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER



**University of Fort Hare**  
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### **ETHICS CLEARANCE** **REC-270710-028-RA Level 01**

Project Number:	NAI011SSEG01
Project title:	<b>An analysis of the design and application of evaluation standards in the South African national evaluation system.</b>
Qualification:	Masters in Public Administration
Principal Researcher:	Morakane Segopolo
Supervisor:	Prof S Naidu
Co-supervisor:	N/A

On behalf of the University of Fort Hare's Research Ethics Committee (UREC) I hereby grant ethics approval for NAI011SSEG01. This approval is valid for 12 months from the date of approval. Renewal of approval must be applied for BEFORE termination of this approval period. Renewal is subject to receipt of a satisfactory progress report. The approval covers the undertakings contained in the above-mentioned project and research instrument(s). The research may commence as from the 22/08/19, using the reference number indicated above.

Note that should any other instruments be required or amendments become necessary, these require separate authorisation.

Please note that the UREC must be informed immediately of

- Any material changes in the conditions or undertakings mentioned in the document;

- Any material breaches of ethical undertakings or events that impact upon the ethical conduct of the research.

The Principal Researcher must report to the UREC in the prescribed format, where applicable, annually, and at the end of the project, in respect of ethical compliance.

The UREC retains the right to

- Withdraw or amend this approval if
  - Any unethical principal or practices are revealed or suspected;
  - Relevant information has been withheld or misrepresented;
  - Regulatory changes of whatsoever nature so require;
  - The conditions contained in the Certificate have not been adhered to.
- Request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the project.

Your compliance with DoH 2015 guidelines and other regulatory instruments and with UREC ethics requirements as contained in the UREC terms of reference and standard operating procedures, is implied.

The UREC wishes you well in your research.

Yours sincerely



**Professor Renuka Vithal**  
**UREC-Chairperson**  
13 November 2019

## APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW DATA COLLECTION DOCUMENTS

### DOCUMENT 1: RESEARCHER COVER LETTER

Dear respondent,

Thank you for your willingness to participate in my study. This research questionnaire is designed to collect data for my research studies (Master of Administration in Public Admin by Research) at University of Fort Hare in East London. I intend to collect data based on the Informed Consent Form that you are requested to voluntarily sign as your confirmation to take part in my research. The questionnaire of my research will focus on the following topic and objectives:

**Topic: An analysis of the design of Evaluation Standards in the South African National Evaluation System**

#### Research objectives

- To analyse the **design** of evaluation standard in the South African National Evaluation System against international evaluation normative frameworks,
- To assess the **theory** underpinning the of the evaluation standards in the South African National Evaluation System



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**Please note:** For ease of reference, the table on evaluation standards for the South African National Evaluation System is attached as Annexure (1) of the research questionnaire

Kind regards,

Ms. Morakane Segopolo

Primary investigator of the research study

Student number [REDACTED]

Tel: [REDACTED] Mobile: [REDACTED]

E-mail Address: [REDACTED]

Date: 27 October 2020



## Sample of Consent Form for respondents

Morakane Jacobeth Segopolo

Student: 201819939

Ethics Human 2015

<<

>>

OFFICE USE ONLY

Ref

Date



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### Ethics Research Confidentiality and Informed Consent Form

#### Please note:

This form is to be completed by the researcher(s) as well as by the interviewee before the commencement of the research. Copies of the signed form must be filed and kept on record

I, Morakane Jacobeth Segopolo hereby request your participation as the former Head of Evaluation component within the Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation (The DPME), to answer some research questions, which we hope will benefit the department and possibly other programme managers who need to enhance their knowledge when applying the Evaluation Standards of the National Evaluation System. It is also envisaged of the research to stimulate an in-depth analysis of the evaluation processes and reports when managing evaluations in government, guided by application of the evaluation standards. |

The topic of the study is as follows: An Analysis of the Design and Application of Evaluation Standards in The South African National Evaluation System.

The focus areas of the research intend to explore a deeper understanding and achievement on the following objectives:

- i. To analyse the design of evaluation standard in the South African National Evaluation System against international evaluation normative frameworks.
- l. To assess the application of the evaluation standards in the South African National Evaluation System in relation to the National Evaluation Policy Framework (NEPF)
- iii. To develop a normative framework for standards in the South African National Evaluation System

Please note that I appreciate the willingness to be part of the study, but your participation is entirely voluntary. You are not being forced to take part in this study and the choice whether to participate or not is yours alone. However, we would really appreciate it if you do share your thoughts with us. If you choose not take part in answering these questions, you will not be affected in any way. If you agree to participate, you may stop me at any time and tell me that you don't want to go on with the interview. If you do this there will also be no penalties and you will NOT be prejudiced in ANY way. Confidentiality will be observed professionally.

I will not be recording your name anywhere on the questionnaire and no one will be able to link you to the answers you give. Only the researchers will have access to the unlinked information. The information will remain confidential and there will be no "come-backs" from the answers you give.

Document approved by UREC: 11 August 2011, V01

Ref	Date
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The interview will last around 20 minutes. Given the challenges related to Covid-19 virus outbreak, which resulted in a call to adapt to new way of communicating, the questions will be provided through an interview schedule that is attached separately.

Most questions of the interview will focus on the design and application of the Evaluation Standards, including the extent to which Evaluation Quality Assessment Tool (EQTA) is viewed and applied as an instruments for improving the quality of evaluation. It is hoped that the thoughtfulness at which the responses will be given, will surely be of great value to the study. When it comes to answering questions, there are no right and wrong answers. If there are questions that you think to be critical for improvement on assessing the design and application of evaluation standards, I will be pleased to hear of those possible areas. These efforts are intended to support initiatives to strengthen and review the National Evaluation System and its related evaluation standards.

If possible, once I have completed the study I would like to share to the participating institutions and role players what the findings and the recommendations of the research study are, and what this means to the institution and the evaluation discourse, specifically with regards the application of evaluation standards.

#### INFORMED CONSENT

I hereby agree to participate in research regarding an Analysis of the Design and Application of Evaluation Standards in the South African National Evaluation System. I understand that I am participating freely and without being forced in any way to do so. I also understand that I can stop this interview at any point should I not want to continue and that this decision will not in any way affect me negatively.

I understand that this is a research project whose purpose is not necessarily to benefit me personally.

I have received the telephone number of a contact person, should I need to speak about any issues which may arise in this interview.

I understand that this consent form will not be linked to the questionnaire, and that my answers will remain confidential.

I understand that if at all possible, feedback will be given to participating institutions on the results of the completed research.

.....N/A.....

Signature of participant

I hereby agree to the tape recording of my participation in the study. N/A

.....  
Signature of participant  
Date: 9 Nov 2020

.....  
Signature of student  
Date: 09 Nov 2020

## DOCUMENT 2: INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

**Topic:** An analysis of the design of Evaluation Standards in the South African National Evaluation System (NES)

**Date of interview:**

**Gender:**

**Years in managing/conducting evaluations:**

Use the table below to mark with **X** on the relevant **section/s** applicable to you.

Related institution / Role	Select and Specify your role
1. DPME: Former/Current Head/Director of the National Evaluation System	
2. DPME: Evaluation Deputy Director/Assistant Director	
3. Office of the Premier (OTP): Programme Manager/ Evaluation Commissioner	
4. Monitoring and Evaluation professional association body (Board member in SAMEA)	

### Interview Questions

**Addendum 1:** Table on evaluation standards for the South African National Evaluation System (NES) has been attached as a reference for the interview questionnaire.

1. The question examines the design of the evaluation standard in the South African National Evaluation System (NES) in terms of existing principles of the system, rationale, building blocks assumptions, theory of change, key intentions / claims, and limitations.

- 1.1 How do the evaluation standards fit with existing NES principles, frameworks and tools?

- 1.2 What was the **rationale** that informed the development of these evaluation standards?

- 1.3 What are the building blocks for these evaluation standards?

1.4 Briefly explain what were the **assumptions** in developing the evaluation standards of the NES?

1.5 What was the **theory of change** behind the introduction of these evaluation standards?

1.6 What are **key intentions/claims** of the evaluation standard in the South African National Evaluation System?

1.7 What are the **limitations** on the design of evaluation standard in the South African National Evaluation System?



2. The question for this section focuses on examining areas of improvement in the design of evaluation standards.

2.1 In your observation, how can the design of the evaluation standards be improved?

3. The question is intended to examine the alignment of the evaluation standards in relation to the Evaluation Quality Assessment Tool (EQTA).

3.1 Who were the primary intended users of the Evaluation Quality Assessment Tool (EQAT)?

3.2 For what purpose was the EQAT designed?

3.3 At what stage of the evaluation process was the tool intended to be used?

3.4 Was the ETQA criteria aligned to the valuation standards (in your response please specify if there were any gaps)?

**4. The question for this section examines how were the evaluation standards and the Evaluation Quality Assessment Tool applied by commissioners and evaluators.**

4.1 Was there a consistent application of Evaluation Standards and Evaluation Quality Assessment tool by the intended users of the instrument?

4.2 To what extent did the application of evaluation standards EQTA improved the quality of reports?

4.3 How did the evaluation Team use the evaluation standards and EQTA during the evaluation process?

4.4 How did you as evaluation commissioner use the evaluation standards and Evaluation Quality Assessment Tool (EQTA) in managing the evaluation process in the following phases? (In responding to this question, make reference to the different evaluation standards related to different phases) yes

4.4.1 Planning, Design and Inception (**Refer to the standards in relation to this phase: Annexure 1**)

4.4.2 Implementation (**Refer to the standards in relation to this phase: Annexure 1**)

4.4.3 Reporting (**Refer to the standards in relation to this phase: Annexure 1**)

4.4.4 Follow-up, use and learning (**Refer to the standards in relation to this phase: Annexure 1)**

**5. This question investigates challenges in the application of standards by the different users**

5.1 In your experience what were some of the challenges experienced in applying the evaluation standards by the different users?

*Please tick the appropriate box/es that resonate/s with your observation.*

- 5.1.1 ☐ Poor implementation of the evaluation standards by national and provincial commissioners.
- 5.1.2 ☐ Capacity constraints (inadequate knowledge and skills by national and provincial commissioners in the use of evaluation standards to manage the evaluation processes.
- 5.1.3 ☐ Diverse interpretation of the evaluation standards and Evaluation Quality Assessment Tool by national and provincial commissioners.
- 5.1.4 ☐ Resistance in the use of evaluation standards.

5.2 Where there any other challenges except those indicated above?



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5.3 In reference to your selection in 5.1, in your view what can be the possible remedial actions for improving these areas?

**Comments**

Are there any observations you would like to make that were not catered for in the questionnaire?

**Thank you for participating in this research study. Your willingness to take time and effort to share about your experience is highly appreciated.**

## Addendum 1: Table on the categories of standards for evaluation in government (2014)

According to the structure of the evaluation standards of the NES guiding document, it should be noted that the section on 'overarching consideration' cuts across all the evaluation standards of the four phases of evaluation (*from planning, implementation, reporting, and follow-up*)

Categories	Evaluation Standards
<b>1.Overarching consideration</b>	1.1 Partnership approach
	1.2 Free and open evaluation process
	1.3 Evaluation Ethics
	1.4 Alignment to policy context and background literature
	1.5 Capacity development
	1.6 Quality control
	1.7 Project management
<b>2.Planning, Design and Inception</b>	2.1 Clarity of purpose and scope in terms of reference (TOR)
	2.2 Evaluability
	2.3 Evaluation is adequately resourced
	2.4 Stakeholder involvement, governance and management structures
	2.5 Selection of evaluation service provider
	2.6 Inception phase
<b>3. Implementation</b>	3.1 Evaluator independence
	3.2 Key stakeholder involvement
	3.3 Ethical considerations
	3.4 Implementation of evaluation within allotted time and budget
<b>4. Reporting</b>	4.1 Intermediate reports
	4.2 Writing and presentation
	4.3 The 1/5/25 report format
	4.4 Coverage of the report
	4.5 Incorporation of stakeholders' comments
<b>5. Follow-up, use and learning</b>	5.1 Timeliness, relevance and use of the evaluation
	5.2 Systematic response to and follow-up on recommendations
	5.3 Dissemination of evaluation results
	5.4 Reflection on the evaluation process and product

## APPENDIX 3: GUIDELINE ON EVALUATION STANDARDS FOR GOVERNMENT



THE PRESIDENCY  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT: PERFORMANCE MONITORING AND EVALUATION

### **Standards for evaluation in government**

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## Introduction

In 2012 the Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) in the Presidency developed standards for government evaluations with support from GIZ. Inputs were also given from a range of other stakeholders including present and past SAMEA board members and the Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results for Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA) based at the Graduate School of Public and Development Management, University of the Witwatersrand. The standards intend to support the use of evaluations conducted through the national evaluation system through setting benchmarks of evaluation quality.

This document is based on the National Evaluation Policy Framework (NEPF), approved in November 2011. This document and the NEPF should be read together. In the NEPF four main purposes of evaluation are described:

- Improving policy or programme performance (evaluation for continuous improvement). This aims to provide feedback to programme managers.
- Evaluation for improving accountability e.g. where is public spending going? Is this spending making a difference?
- Improving decision-making e.g. should the intervention be continued? Should how it is implemented be changed? Should increased budget be allocated?
- Evaluation for generating knowledge (for learning): increasing knowledge about what works and what does not with regards to a public policy, programme, function or organisation.

The South African government's approach to putting into operation these four purposes intends to promote the use of evaluation. Likewise the standards contained in this document encourage the utilisation of findings and consider standards in relation to five stages of evaluation: (1) overarching considerations prior to the evaluation, (2) planning the evaluation, (3) the evaluation process, (4) the evaluation findings, and (5) the eventual use.

These South African government evaluation standards are based on a review of a range of international evaluation standards, their strengths, weaknesses, and appropriateness for South Africa. The OECD DAC standards were identified as the most appropriate starting point and they have also drawn from the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (JCSEE) and the Swiss Evaluation Society (SEVAL).

The standards are written in the present tense – with the standard being that the point in question is applied.

In 2013 DPME developed an evaluation quality assessment process (EQA) based on these standards. The quality assessment indicators used in this process are provided in the tables below, with weightings from 1 to 10. This version of the standards incorporates the lessons from applying the EQA in 2012/13 and 2013/14. The quality assessment tool can be downloaded from the DPME website.

All guidelines referenced here are available on the DPME website: [www.thepresidency-dpme.gov.za](http://www.thepresidency-dpme.gov.za)

## **1 Overarching considerations**

When carrying out an evaluation the following overarching considerations are taken into account throughout the process. In some cases there are specific indicators below in other cases there are indicators under specific standards.

### **1.1 Partnership approach**

In order to increase ownership of the evaluation and maximise the likelihood of use, and build mutual accountability for results, a partnership approach to development evaluation is considered systematically early in the process. The concept of partnership connotes an inclusive process in the production of the evaluation. This will involve work on a range of evaluation issues (e.g. questions, issues statement, terms of reference) with different stakeholders of the particular intervention. These stakeholders may include government, civil society, and target group (and in some cases international development partners).

### **1.2 Free and open evaluation process**

Where appropriate the evaluation process is transparent and independent from programme management and policy-making, to enhance credibility. In some cases (e.g. for implementation evaluations), these will be undertaken jointly between evaluator and department, to maximise ownership and the likelihood of use.

### **1.3 Evaluation ethics**

Evaluations abide by relevant professional and ethical guidelines and codes of conduct for individual evaluators. Evaluation is undertaken with integrity and honesty. Programme managers, M&E advisors and evaluators respect human rights and differences in culture, customs, religious beliefs and practices of all stakeholders. Evaluators and M&E advisors are mindful of gender roles, ethnicity, ability, age, sexual orientation, language and other differences when designing and carrying out the evaluation.

In addition the evaluation takes account of the ethics in dealing with informants in the evaluation process, including issues of anonymity, and using an ethics board where needed.

### **1.4 Alignment to policy context and background literature**

To help improve co-ordination of evaluation and implementation of evaluation results, the evaluation process must take into account the roles of different stakeholders, seeking to ensure those critical to the intervention are involved in the evaluation, e.g. on the evaluation steering committee, and that others are consulted during the evaluation. These different stakeholders also need to be involved in taking forward the improvement plan arising from the evaluation, as appropriate. This may include partners who are not immediate partners in the evaluation process, but who can affect the implementation or usage of results from the evaluation.

There should be evidence that a review of the relevant literature including policy, legislation and programme environments has been conducted and used in planning the evaluation.

## 1.5 Capacity development

The process of evaluation has positive effects on the evaluation capacity of the partners involved as well as developing the capacity of evaluators. An evaluation may, for instance, support capacity development by improving evaluation knowledge and skills, strengthening evaluation management, stimulating demand for and use of evaluation findings, and supporting an environment of accountability and learning. This capacity development should be through an explicit learning-by-doing process, as well as in the process adopted.

Indicator	Weighting
Where appropriate <sup>1</sup> , an element of capacity building of partners responsible for the evaluand was incorporated into the evaluation process.	6
Where appropriate, the evaluation team incorporated an element of skills development amongst the evaluators (e.g. students, interns, recent graduates, etc.).	4

## 1.6 Quality control

Quality control is exercised throughout the evaluation process. Depending on the evaluation's scope and complexity, quality control is carried out through an internal and/or external process. Peer review is conducted of the methodology during the inception phase and during the evaluation. An evaluation quality assessment (EQA) will be conducted to reflect on the process as well as the product of the evaluation, and draw out lessons for future evaluations.

Indicator	Weighting
The methods employed in the process of the evaluation were consistent with those planned.	8
Forms of data gathering were appropriate given the scope of evaluation.	8
A pilot of data collection instrumentation occurred prior to undertaking data collection.	8
The data analysis approach and methods were appropriate and sufficient given the purpose of the evaluation.	8
Data collection was not compromised by field-work – level problems or unplanned diversions from original intentions.	4

## 1.7 Project management

The evaluation is conceived, planned, managed and conducted and results are made available to commissioners in a timely manner to achieve the objectives of the

<sup>1</sup> The qualifier is intended to allow for evaluations that are largely desktop exercises such as Evaluation Syntheses or evaluations that rely on secondary data only. We acknowledge that in some instances it may be inappropriate to build capacity on either the side of the evaluators or those responsible for the evaluand, albeit these cases are limited.



evaluation. The entire evaluation process is carried out efficiently, effectively, timeously and within resource allocation. Changes in conditions, circumstances, timeframe and budget are reported. Any changes are explained, discussed and agreed between the relevant parties and approved at an Evaluation Steering Committee meeting. The entire evaluation process is within allotted time and budget.

## 2 Planning, Design and Inception

### 2.1 Clarity of purpose and scope in terms of reference (TOR)

Clear terms of reference are developed for the evaluation which specify what is required and appropriate for the policy, programme, or project being evaluated. The planning and design phase culminates in the drafting of a Terms of Reference (TOR), presenting the purpose, scope, and objectives of the evaluation; the methodology to be used; the resources and time allocated; reporting requirements; and any other expectations regarding the evaluation process and products. The document is agreed to by the Evaluation Steering Committee including the evaluation manager(s) and is refined during the inception phase. Guidance on the areas to be covered by the TOR are indicated in the *DPME Guideline 2.2.1*, "How to Develop Evaluation Terms of Reference for evaluation projects".

Indicator	Weighting
The evaluation was guided by a well-structured and complete TOR or a well-structured and complete internal evaluation proposal.	10
The purpose of the evaluation stated in the TOR (or an internal evaluation proposal) was clear and explicit.	8
The evaluation questions in the TOR (or an internal evaluation proposal) were clearly stated and appropriate for addressing the evaluation purpose.	8
The approach and type of evaluation was suited to the purpose and scope of the evaluation TOR (or an internal evaluation proposal).	8
The TOR (or an internal evaluation proposal) identified the intended users of the evaluation and their information needs.	6
Key stakeholders were involved in the scoping of the TOR and choosing the purpose of the evaluation.	8
There was evidence that a review of the relevant policy and programme environments had been conducted and used in planning the evaluation.	4
There was evidence of a review of appropriate literature having been conducted and used in planning the evaluation <sup>2</sup> .	6

### 2.2 Evaluability

The feasibility of an evaluation is assessed. Specifically, it should be determined whether or not the intervention is adequately defined and its results verifiable, and if evaluation is the best way to answer questions posed by policy makers or stakeholders.

Indicator	Weighting
There was explicit reference to the intervention logic or the theory of change of the evaluand in the planning of the evaluation	6

<sup>2</sup> This could be through a workshop with stakeholders tabling relevant research around the topic.

The planned methodology was appropriate to the questions being asked	8
Sampling was appropriate and adequate given focus and purpose of evaluation	8

### 2.3 Evaluation is adequately resourced

The resources provided for the evaluation are adequate, in terms of funds, staff and skills, to ensure that the objectives of the evaluation can be fulfilled effectively. Guidance is available on likely budget envelopes.

Indicator	Weighting
The evaluation was adequately resourced in terms of time allocated.	6
The evaluation was adequately resourced in terms of original budget.	8
The evaluation was adequately resourced in terms of staffing and skills sets.	6

### 2.4 Stakeholder involvement, governance and management structures

Relevant stakeholders are involved early on in the evaluation process and given the opportunity to contribute to evaluation design, including by identifying issues to be addressed and evaluation questions to be answered.

A formal evaluation steering committee is constituted which includes these key stakeholders, and which meets to approve the TOR, inception report, other key reports, and to develop the improvement plan. The Evaluation Steering Committee safeguards credibility, inclusiveness, and transparency of the evaluation.<sup>3</sup> The relevant department commissions the evaluation, organises the evaluation process and is responsible for day-to-day administration. Depending on the evaluation, these functions may be combined in one department or involve several departments.

Indicator	Weighting
The TOR (or an internal evaluation proposal) identified the intended users of the evaluation and their information needs.	6
Key stakeholders were involved in the scoping of the TOR and choosing the purpose of the evaluation.	8
Where appropriate, the evaluation planned to incorporate an element of capacity building of partners/staff responsible for the evaluation.	2
Key stakeholders were consulted on the design and methodology of the evaluation.	8
There was a planned process for using the findings of the evaluation.	6

### 2.5 Selection of evaluation service provider

The supply chain process is used effectively and transparently for selecting the evaluation service provider. The mix of evaluative skills, thematic knowledge and a

<sup>3</sup> A guide has been produced on Evaluation Steering Committees which is available on the DPME website.

suitable PDI/gender balance are considered in the selection of the service provider.<sup>4</sup> Guidance on this is indicated in the *DPME Guideline 2.2.1*, "How to Develop Evaluation Terms of Reference for Evaluation Projects" – Section 8.4.2. Functional evaluation criteria, page 13/14.

## 2.6 Inception phase

The terms of reference (TORs) are refined during the inception phase, where the scope of work is elaborated, and the methodology detailed in the Evaluation Plan, which may be part of the inception report. This report is agreed by the Evaluation Steering Committee.

Indicator	Weighting
The inception phase was used to develop a common agreement on how the evaluation would be implemented.	6

<sup>4</sup> This is included in the criteria for selection but not a standard per se.

### 3 Implementation

#### 3.1 Evaluator independence

Where conducted externally, evaluators are independent from the development intervention, including its policy, operations and management functions, as well as the target group of the intervention. Possible conflicts of interest are addressed openly and honestly. The evaluation team is able to work freely and without interference. It is assured of co-operation and access to all relevant information.

In some cases evaluations will be conducted internally. In these cases peer review is particularly important to ensure that there has been adequate impartiality in the conduct of the evaluation and that it is credible.

Indicator	Weighting
Where external, the evaluation team was able to work freely without significant interference.	6
The evaluation team was impartial and there was no evidence of conflict of interest.	8
Peer review of the agreed evaluation design and methodology occurred prior to undertaking data collection.	4
Peer Review of the draft evaluation report occurred prior to finalisation of the evaluation report.	6

#### 3.2 Key stakeholder involvement

The full range of stakeholders are consulted during the evaluation process and given the opportunity to contribute, including the clients of the programme or policy in question. The criteria for identifying and selecting stakeholders are specified in the evaluation report. Key standards were consulted through a formalised mechanism or institutional arrangement. Where appropriate, an element of capacity building of partners responsible for the evaluation was incorporated into the evaluation process.

Indicator	Weighting
Key stakeholders were consulted through a formalised mechanism or institutional arrangement.	6
Key stakeholders were significantly engaged as part of the methodology.	6
The methodology included engaging beneficiaries appropriately as a key source of data and information.	8
Recommendations are made in consultation with appropriate sector partners or experts.	6

#### 3.3 Ethical considerations

The rights and welfare of participants in the evaluation are protected, and an ethical committee used to review procedures, if needed. Anonymity and confidentiality of individual informants is protected when requested or as needed.



Indicator	Weighting
Where data was gathered in contexts where ethical sensitivity is high, appropriate clearance was achieved through an ethics review board; e.g. in evaluation involving minors, institutions where access usually requires ethical or bureaucratic clearance, and situations where assurances of confidentiality was offered to participants.	8
The full report documents procedures intended to ensure confidentiality and to secure informed consent where necessary (in some cases this is not needed e.g. evaluation synthesis, in which case N/A should be recorded).	6
There are no risks to participants in disseminating the original report on a public website.	8
There are no unfair risks to institutions in disseminating the original report on a public website.	6

### 3.4 Implementation of evaluation within allotted time and budget

The evaluation is conducted and results are made available to commissioners in a timely manner to achieve the objectives of the evaluation. The evaluation is carried out efficiently and within budget. Changes in conditions, circumstances, timeframe and budget are reported. Any changes are explained, discussed and agreed between the relevant parties and approved by the Evaluation Steering Committee.

Indicator	Weighting
The evaluation was conducted without significant shifts to scheduled project milestones and timeframes.	2
The evaluation was completed within the agreed budget.	4

## 4 Reporting

### 4.1 Intermediate reports

Where appropriate, intermediate reports are provided including: final data collection instruments and other tools; analysis plan; other technical or process reports, e.g. fieldwork report. These are specified in the TORs. Descriptions of metadata<sup>5</sup> are included in the final report. Financial expenditure on the evaluation is tacked in intermediate reports to the Evaluation Steering Committee.

### 4.2 Writing and presentation

Draft and final evaluation reports are produced which cover the full detail of the evaluation. Reports will be written documents. Final evaluation reports include a detailed report maximum 150 pages as well as a summary report in the 1/5/25 format described below. The full report will detail the questions, context, intervention logic, methodology, analysis, conclusions and recommendations, limitations and in an annex description of information sources, as described in subsequent standards. All forms of report will be accessible for the wider public. In addition if feasible, appropriate and useful, reports can also be presented in a variety of formats (e.g. video, presentations etc.). Quality of writing and presentation is adequate for publication.

Indicator	Weighting
Quality of writing and presentation is adequate for publication including: adequate layout and consistent formatting; complete sentences and no widespread grammatical or typographical errors; consistency of style and writing conventions (e.g. tense, perspective (first person, third person); levels of formality; references complete and consistent with cited references in reference list and vice versa; etc.	8
Appropriate conventions are used in presentation of data (e.g. use of appropriate statistical language; reporting of p-values where appropriate; not reporting statistically insignificant findings as significant; clarifying disaggregation categories in constructing percentages; not using quantitative language in reporting qualitative data; etc.	8
The use of figures and tables is such that it supports communication and comprehension of results; and data reported in figures and tables are readily discernible and useful to a reader familiar with data presentation conventions.	6

### 4.3 The 1/5/25 report format

The 1/5/25 page evaluation report should be readily understood by the intended audience(s) and the form of the report appropriate given the purpose(s) of the evaluation. It contains a 1 page policy summary, a 4-5 page executive summary and a 25 page main report. The executive summary provides an overview of the report, covering all the sections and highlighting the main findings, conclusions,

<sup>5</sup> Metadata include data descriptions and how data are dealt with in the evaluation. This is described in Annex 1 of the *DPME Guideline 2.2.1, "How to Develop Evaluation Terms of Reference for Evaluation Projects."*

recommendations and any overall lessons. Key evidence is included in the 1/5/25 report so it is authoritative. Full references should be provided as an attachment to these reports.

Indicator	Weighting
Policy summary <sup>6</sup> and executive summary capture key components of the report appropriately.	4

#### 4.4 Coverage of the report

Report is well-structured and presentation is clear and complete. The report explicitly covers the following:

##### 4.4.1 Evaluation questions answered

The evaluation report answers all the questions detailed in the TOR, or the evaluation management plan of the evaluation. Where this is not possible, explanations are provided. The original questions, as well as any revisions to these questions, are documented in the report for readers to be able to assess whether the evaluation team has sufficiently addressed the questions, including those related to cross-cutting issues, and met the evaluation objectives.

Indicator	Weighting
There is a clear rationale for the evaluation questions	6
The scope or focus of the evaluation is apparent in the report.	8
Conclusions address the original evaluation purpose and questions	8

##### 4.4.2 Context of the development intervention

The evaluation reports (full and 1/5/25) describe the context of the development intervention, including:

- policy context, related policies, objectives and strategies;
- development context, including socio-economic, political and cultural factors;
- institutional context and stakeholder involvement.

Indicator	Weighting
The context of the development intervention is explicit and presented as relevant to the evaluation.	4
Conclusions take into account relevant empirical and analytical work from related research studies and evaluations.	6
Recommendations are relevant to the current policy context.	8

##### 4.4.3 Intervention logic

The evaluation reports describe and assess the intervention logic or theory, including underlying assumptions and factors affecting the success of the intervention and make suggestions for how these should be amended.

<sup>6</sup> For historical evaluations there may be no policy summary in which case the executive summary will be used.

Indicator	Weighting
Conclusions are drawn with explicit reference to the intervention logic or theory of change.	6

#### 4.4.4 Explanation of the methodology used

The full evaluation report describes the evaluation methodology and its application in an annex and the 1/5/25 report provides a short summary. This includes clearly explaining attribution and/or contribution to results. The report acknowledges any constraints encountered and how these may have potentially affected the evaluation, including its independence and impartiality. It details the techniques used for data collection and analysis. The choices are justified and limitations and shortcomings are explained.

Indicators	Weighting
A detailed methodology is outlined in the relevant section of the report (full report or 1/5/25) to the point that a reader can understand the data collection, analysis and interpretation approaches used.	8
The report suggests that the evaluation is free of significant methodological and analytical flaws.	8

#### 4.4.5 Clarity of analysis of conclusions

The evaluation reports present findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons separately and with a clear logical distinction between them. Findings flow logically from the analysis of the data, showing a clear line of evidence to support the conclusions. Conclusions are substantiated by findings and analysis. Recommendations and any lessons follow logically from the conclusions. Any assumptions underlying the analysis are made explicit.

Indicator	Weighting
Data analysis appears to have been well executed.	8
The evidence gathered is sufficiently and appropriately analysed to support the argument.	8
Key findings are presented in a clear way; they are made distinct from uncertain or speculative findings and unused data is not presented in the body of the report.	6
Findings are supported by available evidence.	8
Conclusions and recommendations are clear and succinctly articulated.	6
Conclusions are derived from evidence.	8

#### 4.4.6 Acknowledgement of changes and limitations of the evaluation

Any limitations in process, methodology or data are reported and explained. The reports indicate any obstruction of a free and open evaluation process which may have influenced the findings. Any discrepancies between the planned and actual implementation and products of the evaluation are explained.

Indicator	Weighting
Acknowledgement of limitations of all aspects of the methodology and findings are clearly and succinctly articulated.	6
Relevant limitations of the evaluation are noted.	6



#### 4.4.7 Validity and reliability of information sources

The full evaluation report describes in an annex the sources of information used (e.g. documents, respondents, administrative data, literature) in sufficient detail so that the adequacy of the information can be assessed. Both evaluation reports explain the selection of case studies or any samples. Limitations regarding the representativeness of the samples are identified.

The evaluation cross-validates the information sources and critically assesses the validity and reliability of the data.

Complete lists of interviewees and other information sources consulted are included in the full report, to the extent that this does not conflict with the privacy and confidentiality of participants.

#### 4.4.8 Acknowledgement of disagreements within the evaluation team

Evaluation team members have the opportunity to dissociate themselves from particular judgments and recommendations on which they disagree. Any unresolved differences of opinion within the team are acknowledged in the report. The possibility of alternative interpretations of the findings is recognised.

Indicator	Weighting
There is appropriate recognition of the possibility of alternative interpretations.	6

#### 4.5 Incorporation of stakeholders' comments

Relevant stakeholders are given the opportunity to comment on the draft report and to inform the recommendations. The final evaluation report reflects these comments and acknowledges any substantive disagreements. In disputes about facts that can be verified, the evaluators investigate and change the draft where necessary. In the case of opinion or interpretation, stakeholders' comments are reproduced verbatim, in an annex or footnote, to the extent that this does not conflict with the rights and welfare of participants.

Indicator	Weighting
Recommendations are shaped following discussions with relevant government officials and other relevant stakeholders.	6

## 5 Follow-up, use and learning

### 5.1 Timeliness, relevance and use of the evaluation

The evaluation is designed, conducted and reported to meet the needs of the intended users. Findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons are clear, relevant, targeted and actionable so that the evaluation can be used to achieve its intended learning and accountability objectives. The evaluation is delivered in time to ensure optimal use of the results.

Indicators	Weighting
The final evaluation report is user-friendly, written in accessible language and its content follows clear logic.	8
Recommendations are targeted at a specific audience sufficiently - are specific, feasible, affordable and acceptable.	6
The evaluation was completed within the planned timeframes.	6
The evaluation study is seen by stakeholders interviewed for the EQA as having added significant symbolic value to the policy or programme (e.g. raised its profile).	6
The evaluation study is of conceptual value in understanding what has happened and possibly in shaping policy and practice.	6

### 5.2 Systematic response to and follow-up on recommendations

A formal management response is requested for each evaluation. The improvement plan is tracked to ensure accountability for their implementation.

Indicator	Weighting
An improvement plan has been developed based on the findings and recommendations set out in the evaluation. <sup>7</sup>	10
There is clear evidence of instrumental use - that the recommendations of the evaluation were implemented to a significant extent.	4
There is clear evidence that the evaluation has had a positive influence on the evaluand, its stakeholders and beneficiaries over the medium long term.	4

### 5.3 Dissemination of evaluation results

Systematic dissemination, storage and management of the evaluation reports is ensured to provide easy access to all development partners, to reach target audiences, additional interested parties, and to maximise the learning benefits of the evaluation.

Indicators	Weighting
Results of the evaluation have been presented to relevant stakeholders	6
The full and 1/5/25 reports are publicly available (website or otherwise published document), except where there were legitimate security concerns.	4

<sup>7</sup> The improvement plan should be developed within 4 months of the final evaluation report being approved by the evaluation steering committee.

#### 5.4 Reflection on the evaluation process and product

A reflective process is undertaken with the Evaluation Steering Committee to reflect on what worked well and what could have been strengthened in the evaluation. These are used to inform the wider national evaluation system and how it can be strengthened.

Indicators	Weighting
A project closure meeting that reflected on the challenges and strengths of the evaluation process occurred.	4
A reflective process has been undertaken by the evaluation steering committee (if no steering committee exists then by the evaluation management team or the involved department officials) to reflect on what could be done to strengthen future evaluations.	2

## APPENDIX 4: GUIDELINE ON EVALUATION QUALITY ASSESSMENT TOOL (EQAT)



### DPME Evaluation Guideline

#### No 2.2.19

### Guideline on Quality Assessment of Government Evaluations

<b>Addressed to</b>	Quality assessors of government evaluations as well as moderators and administrators of the process. Evaluators, programme staff and M&E advisors should also be familiar with it.
<b>Purpose</b>	The purpose of this document is to give practical guidance on the undertaking of quality assessments of government evaluations using the web-based platform within the Evaluations Management Information System (EMIS).
<b>Policy reference</b>	National Evaluations Policy Framework Standards for evaluation in government Evaluation competency framework for government
<b>Contact person for this guideline</b>	Mark Everett, Evaluation and Research Unit (ERU) E-mail: mark@dpme.gov.za Tel: 012 3120169

## 1. Introduction

This document is intended to provide a step-by-step guide on how to undertake a quality assessment of a government evaluation. It has been developed to ensure that assessors follow a replicable process and consistently apply the quality assessment instruments via the electronic platform for transparent and objective meta-analyses of evaluations. If followed correctly, the output of this process should be an assessment report that gives a credible appraisal of the overall quality of the evaluation undertaken, as well as its various phases and components.



The process was developed and refined as part of an assessment of government evaluation projects for the Department of Planning, Monitoring & Evaluation (DPME) in which the first set of 93 evaluations completed between 2006 and 2013 underwent retrospective quality assessments, with an additional 64 quality assessments completed between 2013 and 2016 (total of 157). These assessments, and the executive summaries of the evaluations developed as part of the project, are available from the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) website. This guide details an improved, user-friendly quality assessment process following the lessons gleaned from completion of the retrospective quality assessments and the introduction of an electronic platform (EMIS) for undertaking these assessments.

## 2. Context

The *Standards for evaluation in government* supports understanding and use of evaluations by setting benchmarks of evaluation quality, providing the basis for the assessment to which this document serves as a guide. The standards distinguish between overarching considerations that should inform the entire evaluation process, and four phases of conducting an evaluation.



The *Standards for evaluation in government* document was integral to the development of the evaluation quality assessment tool and indicators. The order and structure of the indicators follow the sequencing of the evaluation phases, and each indicator is aligned to an overarching consideration with a few exceptions. After multiple iterations, the tool has been refined to provide an exhaustive presentation of all the principles that define an evaluation of good quality. The four phases of an evaluation against which standards are assessed include:

- (1) planning, design and inception;
- (2) implementation;
- (3) reporting;
- (4) follow-up, use and learning.

The cross-cutting overarching considerations that are assessed across the four phases include:

- (1) partnership approach;
- (2) free and open evaluation process;

- (3) evaluation ethics;
- (4) coordination and alignment;
- (5) capacity development;
- (6) quality control; and
- (7) project management.

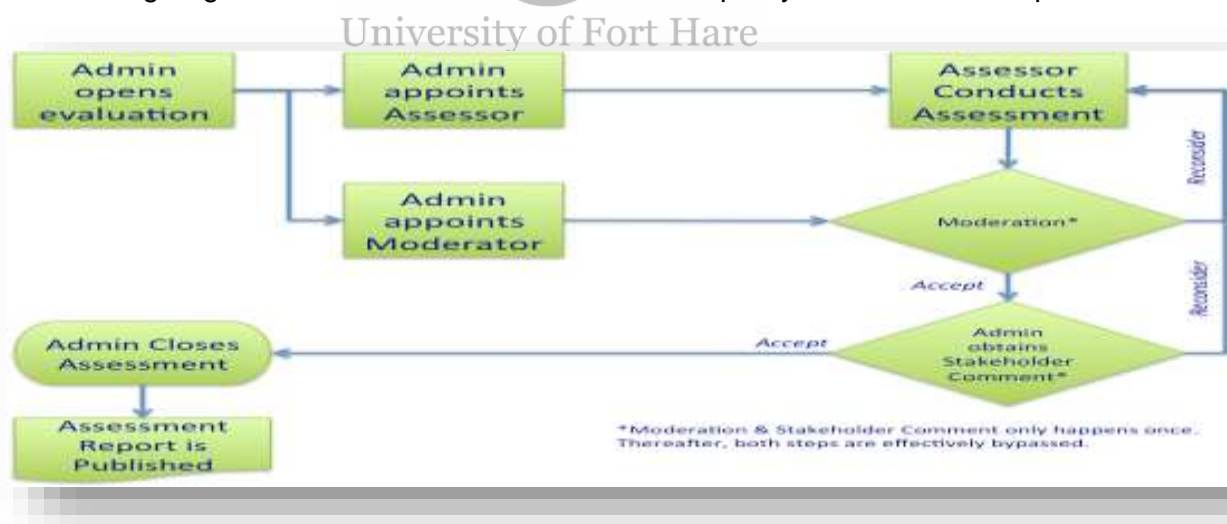
The standards have an acknowledged bias towards utilisation, consistent with the National Evaluation Policy Framework (NEPF), as the value of evaluation in government is contingent upon an understanding of how findings, conclusions and recommendations from evaluations may assist in realising the purposes of government evaluations in practice.

### 3. Evaluation Quality Assessment Framework

#### 3.1. Evaluation Quality Assessment Framework

The Evaluation Quality Assessment Framework exists to clarify the arrangements, responsibilities, timing and processes followed for undertaking quality assessments. It recognizes the overarching goals of the quality assessment system as improving evaluation practice, assessing gaps and identifying technical support to evaluation practice.

The following high-level overview indicates how a quality assessment is processed.



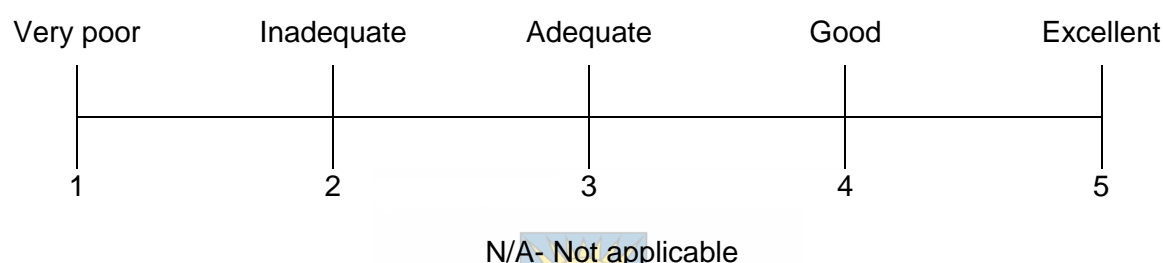
**Figure 1: High-level overview of quality assessment process**

The following sections provide more details on the components of the quality assessment framework and system.

## 4. Quality Assessment Ratings

During the development of the tool for the assessment of government evaluations a number of approaches were considered for rating an evaluation across a generalised set of criteria. The use of a Likert-type rating scale was decided for application to a set of evaluation standards. These standards were then rated on an equidistant scale ranging from 'Very poor' to 'Excellent' with each level of the standard rating scale clearly defined on a standard basis. Figure 2 below presents the Likert-type scale applied for each evaluation standard as a distinct item.

**Figure 2: Likert-type scale for evaluation standard items**



In the event that an evaluation standard does not apply for a given evaluation (ie. in the case of obtaining ethical clearance for an evaluation synthesis), a Not Applicable (N/A) rating is provided. However, Not Applicable is not a rating in the true sense, since it designates that the evaluation standard is omitted entirely from the composite measure of an assessment area, phase and overarching consideration. Only with clear motivation in the comment may the rating Not Applicable be given.

In application of this scale, individual evaluation standard items are rated from 1-5, of which a group of items make up a composite measure of a given assessment area. Within each phase of the evaluation process, a unique set of assessment areas and their comprising evaluation standard items are aligned.

In this way, a designated group of evaluation standard items make-up a composite measure of an assessment area while the aggregate of all evaluation standard items for a given phase make up a composite measure of the phase. Assessment areas are generally comprised of multiple standard items. However, with the reduction of standard items over time some assessment areas are now defined solely by a single standard item and so analysis should be framed in terms of individual standard items, phases and overarching considerations.

Evaluation standard items are arranged sequentially within a phase from which a composite indicator score is generated. A similar arrangement is applied in the case of overarching

considerations, except that these considerations are cross-cutting over the four phases. In this way, evaluation standard items combined differently are conceptualised as the constituent parts of an overarching consideration that are expressed as a composite measure. The rating scale and alignment therefore allow the rating of individual evaluation standard items that produce an overarching consideration composite score and a phased composite score, depending on which of the various elements of an evaluation an assessor is interested in.

#### 4.1. Weighting

In the course of the development of the rating system, it became apparent that not every indicator is of equal significance in the evaluation process. Evaluation standard items are therefore weighted individually based on their relative importance across the entire evaluation process as determined by DPME stakeholders. In this manner, the weighting of an individual evaluation standard item is consistent whether it is calculated as part of the aggregate measure for an overarching consideration or phase.

When calculating an overall quality rating for the evaluation, it is recognised that different phases may have a greater significance to the overall evaluation relative to the others. Thus, in producing an overall composite measure of all the evaluation standard items within each of the four phases, each of the phases are given a different weighting based on the significance of that phase as designated by DPME within the overall evaluation process.

The following table shows the weighting applied to each phase in the calculation of the final composite indicator:

Phase of Evaluation	Weighting
1. Planning & Design	20
2. Implementation	20
3. Report	40
4. Follow-up, use and learning	20

#### 4.2. Guide for interpreting the score results

Every evaluation that undergoes quality assessment receives an overall quality rating of 1.00-5.00, consistent with the 5-point Likert-type scale displayed above. In line with the ratings, a minimum rating of 3.00- “Adequate” is suggested. Those evaluations that meet the threshold of 3.00 as an adequate standard or above are proposed for benchmarking purposes. Those evaluations that fall below the adequate standard, from 2.99 and below, are indicative of an evaluation that is on balance of a poor quality, therefore the findings and recommendations may be questionable or the evaluation process followed may not support utilisation and uptake of the recommendations.

The distinction between phase, overarching consideration and criteria assessment area allows for a significant degree of specificity in identifying an evaluation's strengths and weaknesses. It helps the assessor, and evaluation stakeholders, to discern which aspects of a given evaluation are rigorous, as well as which elements of the evaluation are found to be lacking or methodologically unsound.

## **5. Resource Requirements**

Prior to undertaking a quality assessment, there are certain resource (human, time, and technological) requirements that should be in place. The following is an overview of the resources required for proper adherence to the guideline.

### **5.1 Administrator requirements**

The administrator is responsible for initiating and concluding the quality assessment process. He or she must identify the evaluation under assessment, assign it a unique referencing number and initiate the quality assessment process by furnishing a copy of the final evaluation report to the assessor. The administrator should also be available for basic support and monitoring of the process, where appropriate.

The administrator is ultimately responsible for ensuring that both the moderator's feedback and the stakeholders' inputs are addressed by the assessor, prior to finalising the assessment. Once the final version of the quality assessment has been submitted the administrator is responsible for reviewing and approving it, at which time a notification email will be sent to both the assessor and moderator indicating that the quality assessment is complete and now available on the EMIS.

### **5.2 Assessor requirements**

When selecting an assessor to undertake the quality assessment, there are a few considerations that should be taken into account. Firstly, the process is designed to be undertaken by an evaluations specialist, with significant knowledge of evaluation practice, the National Evaluation System as well as significant depth of understanding of relevant evaluation methodologies and analytical approaches. For reasons such as consistency in completion of the assessment tool and a holistic evaluation perspective, rather than a component or silo understanding, a single assessor should be appointed to undertake the quality assessment.

The assessor's responsibilities comprise data collection, analysis and write-up. Once submitted, the assessor needs to avail him or herself for revisions following input from moderators and evaluation stakeholders, once the quality assessment report and summary

are released. This entire process is dealt with in more detail via the steps identified in the next section.

### 5.3 Sector expert (ad hoc)

It is proposed that on an ad hoc basis a sector expert, preferably with some knowledge of evaluations, also be identified to act in a referential role for the assessor.

The reference person's responsibilities require availability on an ad hoc basis and he or she is not expected to engage directly with the evaluation report or collected evaluation documentation.

### 5.4 Moderator requirements

A moderator sufficiently removed from the quality assessment is required to check for the completeness of the quality assessment and ensure consistency in the application of ratings throughout the assessment tool. As the moderator is not expected to do more than a high-level quality review (excluding review of the actual evaluation documentation and interview data) of the assessment report, this should be undertaken by a DPME/ Office of the Premier/ Departmental staff member familiar with the quality assessment process. The responsibilities are limited to providing one round of feedback to the assessor, prior to submission to the evaluation stakeholders.



### 5.5 Time requirements

All estimates of time requirements may fluctuate due to the varying nature of the evaluation under assessment, access to data/informants, and the findings of the quality assessment generated by the tool. A time allocation for the estimated actual working hours and timespan for completion is provided in the following table for each step in the process. The following serves as an example of the total time allocations.

Activity brief	Complete quality assessment process	Time	+/- 40 hours of work spread over 4-7 weeks depending on availability of interviewees, documentation and moderation
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## 6. Assessment Process

Once an evaluation has been selected for assessment and assigned to an assessor by the administrator, the assessment process begins. The quality assessment follows five stages, broken down over the following steps.

**Initiation:**

- Administrator assigns evaluation to assessor
- Assessor accesses EMIS and records evaluation details

**Data collection:**

- Assessor collects evaluation documentation
- Assessor identifies respondents and conduct interviews

**Assessment and write-up:**

- Assessor completes assessment tool and comments
- Assessor writes assessment summary
- Assessor references all documents and interviews
- Assessor uploads all documents used
- Assessor submits for moderation

**Moderation and revision:**

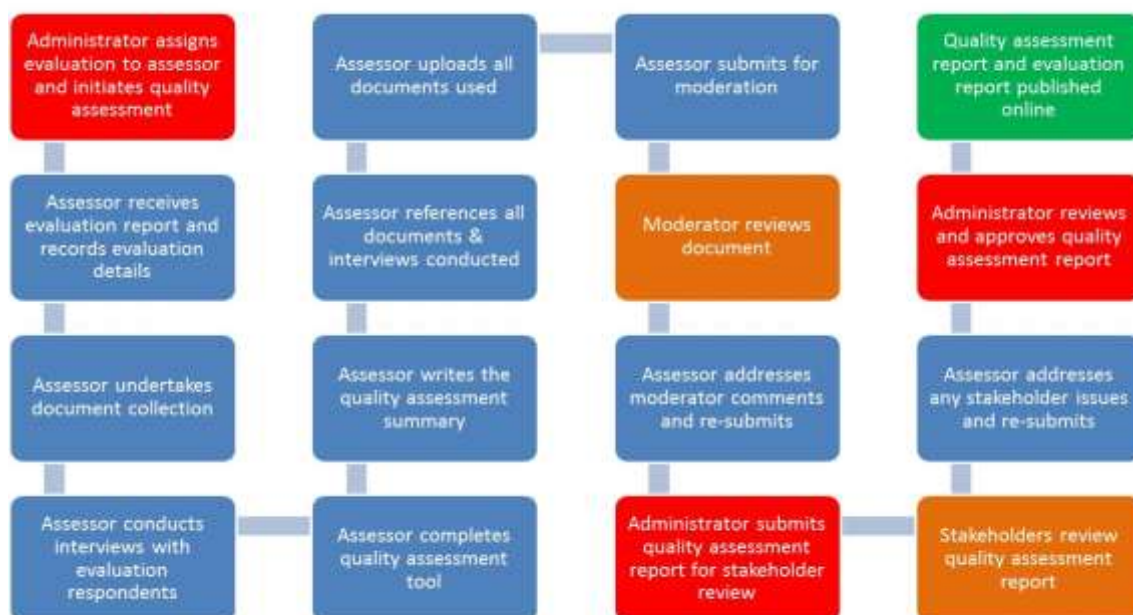
- Moderator reviews quality assessment report
- Assessor addresses moderator comments and resubmits
- Administrator confirms completion before submitting quality assessment report to evaluation stakeholders
- Stakeholders review quality assessment report and give comments
- Where comments are received, the Assessor considers any stakeholder issues and resubmits

**Conclusion:**

- Administrator reviews and approves quality assessment (QA) report
- Quality assessment report and evaluation report are published online; however, for evaluations in the NEP, the QA can only be made public once the final report has been approved by cabinet.

The following process map illustrates actions taken during the quality assessment process.





**Figure 3: Process map of the quality assessment process**

## 6.1 Initiation

Once an evaluation has been completed, a quality assessment will be initiated shortly thereafter. The initiation will consist of the administrator sourcing the evaluation report and giving the assessor access to the EMIS. The following two steps describe the process.

### 6.1.1. Administrator assigns evaluation to assessor

An administrator is responsible for the initiation, final review and approval of the quality assessment of a conducted evaluation. To initiate a quality assessment, the administrator will add an assessment, listing the title, a unique reference number for the assessment, and assign the moderator as per the EMIS instructions. Thereafter, the administrator will assign an EMIS user as the assessor and upload a copy of the evaluation report to the QA system. The assessor can then access the launched assessment and begin completing the evaluation details.

### 6.1.2. Assessor captures evaluation details

The assessor's first task is to capture basic information about the evaluation. This will require a thorough reading of the evaluation report. The assessor should capture basic evaluation background information such as the commissioning agency, date and duration of the evaluation, cost of the evaluation, sector, evaluand, etc. Once all of the basic evaluation information is captured, this information should be saved on the EMIS under the evaluation details page and the assessor should proceed to data collection.



<b>Activity brief</b>	Assessor undertakes review of report and captures evaluation details	<b>Time</b>	Approximately 4 hours
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## 6.2. Data collection

In order to assess an evaluation, it is important to secure access to all of the relevant information relating to the evaluation process, from planning and inception through to follow-up, use and learning. The interviews also provide another source of data for triangulation purposes and may yield more nuanced insights into the evaluation process. The following steps explain the data collection process for the two methods employed for the purpose of the quality assessment.

### 6.2.1. Assessor collects evaluation documentation

During the course of an evaluation a range of documentation is generated that gives insight into the quality of the evaluation undertaken. The following table presents a list of documentation necessary for an assessor to undertake a quality assessment.

Required documents to inform assessment <sup>1</sup>	Other documents to inform assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Terms of Reference (ToR) for the evaluation or evaluation proposal if conducted internal to the public service</li> <li>• An inception report</li> <li>• Data collection tools or instruments</li> <li>• The approved evaluation report</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service level agreement between the commissioning organisation and the service provider (when applicable)</li> <li>• Minutes of steering committee meetings</li> <li>• Fieldwork report</li> <li>• Copies of datasets</li> </ul>

**Table 1: List of evaluation documentation required for quality assessment**

The list of preferred documents presents the ideal set of information that should be available to an assessor. Although not all of the mentioned documentation may be critical to an assessment, having access to the information may explain the rationale and practical considerations for decisions that were taken, and document the agreements reached to maintain the credibility of the evaluation.

Access to the aforementioned documentation should also assist in the identification of key respondents. Obtaining the most insight into the evaluation will require engagement with the appropriate role-players. As such, a preliminary review of the collected documentation is

<sup>1</sup> Denotes what should be considered the minimum required documents to undertake a quality assessment. If these four documents (or comparable substitutes) are not available, it is recommended the quality assessment should not proceed until such time as they are made available.

recommended to help inform the next step of the quality assessment, semi-structured interviews.

<b>Activity brief</b>	Assessor collects available evaluation documentation	<b>Time</b>	Approximately 2 hours Allow 1-2 weeks for sourcing all documentation
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## 6.2.2. Assessor identifies key informants and conduct interviews

Using the available documentation and preliminary contact with the evaluation secretariat or equivalent, the assessor will then identify potential informants from the evaluation. The following are generic role-players who should be considered for interviews:

- **Programme manager**

As the manager responsible for programme implementation is central to the evaluation and should have been involved in either the planning, implementation or follow-up to the evaluation.

- **Evaluation manager or M&E advisor**

The evaluation manager or M&E advisor's responsibilities for the evaluation may vary from department to department depending on the extent of involvement in the evaluation. In the case of internal evaluations, the M&E advisor may also be the evaluator.

- **Evaluator**

In most instances, the evaluator will be external to the commissioning organisation or department and may include an extensive team, depending on the scope and nature of the evaluation.

- **Other potential respondents**

In instances where other key stakeholders played an integral role in the evaluation itself, it may be appropriate for the assessor to consider interviewing informants other than the aforementioned role-players. Peer reviewers or representatives of the commissioning organisation may also be interviewed as appropriate. See **Annexure A** for an example of an interview Guide.

<b>Activity brief</b>	Assessor interviews key informants involved in the evaluation	<b>Time</b>	Approximately 10 hours (up to 2 hours per informant and two weeks for securing and conducting interviews)
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## 6.3. Assessment and write-up

Once data collection is complete, the assessor can begin assessing the evaluation against the assessment areas and standards in the quality assessment tool. Based on the collected documentation and the primary data collected during the semi-structured interviews, each indicator standard should be rated and a comment motivating the rating. The completion of the assessment tool and write-up of the assessment summary is explained below.

### 6.3.1. Assessor completes assessment tool and report

The content of the quality assessment report is captured by the assessor in the ratings of the 42 standard items and comment boxes of the quality assessment tool. In order to produce a complete assessment report, all of the blank cells that require information, including rating scales and comment boxes, need to be completed during the assessment. Refer to the explanation of the rating scale in the framework section for further clarity in this regard.

For each of the four phases of the evaluation, the assessor should complete all standard items with comments and ratings. Comments should substantiate the ratings given by the assessor, and where appropriate refer back to specific documentation or interviews. Where there are gaps in the available documentation, interview data should address gaps.



<b>Activity brief</b>	Assessor completes ratings and comments for the quality assessment	<b>Time</b>	Approximately 6 hours
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### 6.3.2. Assessor writes the assessment summary

The assessment tool has been created in such a way that once the assessor records the ratings and comments for each standard in the tool, the information automatically pulls through to an assessment report which presents data for each of the evaluation phases and overarching considerations in a series of summary tables and graphs. A summary (between 3-5 paragraphs) outlining the key findings of the quality assessment should be completed by the assessor using the graphs and tables presented at the start of the report.

#### Phased scores

The composite indicator scores for the four phases of the evaluation give an assessment of the quality of evaluative conduct per phase. These scores are based on the overall rating scale of 1-5, with weightings given to each standard within a given phase. When the assessor compiles the quality assessment summary it is worthwhile interrogating the distribution of scores within a phase to distinguish those strong elements of the evaluation from the weak.

## Overarching considerations

The overarching considerations are seven cross-cutting principles that inform the evaluation and each of the standards is aligned to a principle of best-fit applied across the four phases of the evaluation with a few exceptions. As such, a composite measure of the quality of the assessment is calculated on a scale of 1-5 for comparability and as an indication of how well the assessment has fared in this regard. When the assessor compiles the assessment summary, the scores of the overarching considerations provide a measure of the strengths and weaknesses of the assessment in terms of these principles.

<b>Activity brief</b>	Assessor writes a summary of the findings of the quality assessment	<b>Time</b>	Approximately 2 hours
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### 6.3.3. Assessor references all interviews and documents consulted

Once the assessor has completed the first draft of the quality assessment report, all documents used to inform the assessment should be referenced in a standard format such as Harvard reference style.

### 6.3.4. Assessor uploads all documents referenced

Once all of the documents have been appropriately referenced, the assessor should electronically upload all of the documents used to inform the assessment. In the event of particularly large files, smaller versions should be saved insofar as possible.

Once all documents have been uploaded the assessor should return to the 'Assessment summary' page. Unlike with the previous steps, the dashboard will continue to show that the 'Assessment Documents' are 'Partially complete'. This will only change once the assessor submits the assessment for moderation as part of the next step.

### 6.3.5. Assessor submits for moderation

After the assessor has completed the assessment and uploaded all of the documentation, he/she should click the 'Validation status' button below the table on the 'Assessment summary' page. This will allow the assessor to confirm that all of the required fields and information have been completed prior to submitting the assessment. If any fields appear as incomplete, the assessor must resolve these before submitting as the system will not allow for any incompletes.

Once complete, the assessor should click the 'Submit assessment' button above the table on the 'Assessment summary' page. If there is not any outstanding information required, the assessor will be taken to the 'Quality Assessment Summary' page. Once there, the assessor

must confirm that all documents have been uploaded by selecting the 'Are all documents uploaded?' box. Once this is selected, the assessor may select the 'Save & Submit Assessment' button. A pop-up box will appear asking whether the assessor is sure about the submission. The assessor should confirm only if the quality assessment is complete, and select 'Ok'.

Once submitted, an automatic email will be generated and sent to the moderator and the administrator indicating the draft assessment has been completed. The next task will be the moderator's.

<b>Activity brief</b>	Assessor submits draft assessment	<b>Time</b>	Less than 1 hour (includes previous two steps)
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## 6.4. Moderation and revision

Once the quality assessment has been completed and submitted, a draft of the assessment report is automatically made available to the moderator. The moderator will then review the submission and provide feedback to the assessor on any standard rating or comments that are inconsistent or incomplete.

### 6.4.1. Moderation of draft quality assessment report

The moderator has the responsibility of reviewing the completed draft assessment report (moderation of the report only, not of the supporting documentation) and checking for completion. This review will require close scrutiny of individual standard ratings and comments. The moderator is responsible for determining whether the assessor's rating and comment for a given standard is 'Accepted', or whether to 'Reconsider' it. In the case of any 'Reconsiders', the moderator will comment/ advise the assessor on what specifically needs to be reconsidered.

One of the most important responsibilities of the moderator is to ensure that the ratings are applied consistently with the rating scale definitions provided. If the ratings are not applied consistently, the moderator should mark incongruent standards 'Reconsider' and explain in the comment area.

Once the moderator has undertaken a thorough review of the draft assessment report, the moderator should save the work before returning to the summary page and selecting the 'Submit moderation' button, submitting the moderation feedback.

<b>Activity brief</b>	Moderator reviews draft assessment report for completion and consistency	<b>Time</b>	Approximately 4 hours
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#### 6.4.2. Assessor addresses moderator comments and resubmits

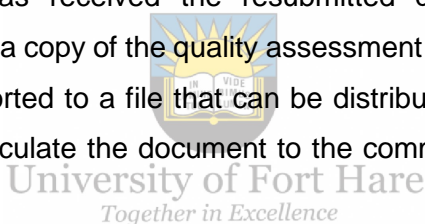
Depending on the extent and nature of the feedback on the quality assessment provided by the moderator, the assessor will be responsible for addressing all standards designated 'Reconsider'. The assessor should ensure that commentary is provided to substantiate the rating provided and that all comments are addressed. Where the assessor disagrees with the moderator or feels sufficient commentary is provided with an appropriate rating, the assessor's final inputs are subject to the review of the administrator.

Submission of the revised quality assessment report will require submission of both the final assessment standards as well as resubmission of the quality assessment summary, complete with the confirmation that all documents have been uploaded again. <sup>2</sup>

<b>Activity brief</b>	Assessor resolves issues identified by moderator	<b>Time</b>	Revisions should not require more than 2 hours, subject to the availability of assessor
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#### 6.4.3. Administrator submits quality assessment report to evaluation stakeholders

Once the administrator has received the resubmitted quality assessment report, the administrator should export a copy of the quality assessment to PDF format. When the quality assessment has been exported to a file that can be distributed independent of the website, the administrator should circulate the document to the commissioning organisation and any evaluation stakeholders.



#### 6.4.4. Stakeholders review quality assessment report

Once a draft of the quality assessment report and summary has been made available to the evaluation stakeholders they should be provided a period of not more than 15 working days, to accept the findings or to challenge them and furnish supporting evidence if appropriate. If specific standards need to be addressed through revisions, the administrator is responsible for capturing this information via review of the assessments standards and submitting this with 'Reconsider' for the identified standards.

#### 6.4.5. Assessor addresses any stakeholder issues and resubmits

Depending on the extent and nature of the feedback on the quality assessment received from the evaluation stakeholders, the assessor's responsibility for addressing the issues raised will vary accordingly. Where the feedback received has a material bearing on the quality assessment score, revisions should be made. The assessor may consult with the moderator

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<sup>2</sup> Note: The Assessment Document tab on the Assessment Summary page will appear as partially incomplete until the revised quality assessment report is resubmitted.

and administrator in undertaking revisions as appropriate. Once any revisions have been concluded, the assessor should make a final submission.

<b>Activity brief</b>	Assessor resolves any material errors based on stakeholder submissions	<b>Time</b>	Revisions should not require more than 2 hours, subject to the availability of assessor. Feedback from stakeholders may take up to 3 weeks.
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## 7. Conclusion

This represents the finalisation of the quality assessment process whereby the final revisions are accepted and the original evaluation report and assessment report published.

### 7.1.1. Administrator approves the final assessment report

Once submission of the revised version of the assessment report occurs, the administrator has to undertake a final review to ensure that all matters raised by the moderator and evaluation stakeholders have been sufficiently addressed in the final quality assessment report. Once the administrator is satisfied with the final quality assessment report, all standards should be marked as 'Accepted' and the quality assessment report should be approved by the administrator.



### 7.1.2. Quality assessment report and evaluation report are published online

Once the quality assessment report has been approved, it should be made available along with a copy of the original evaluation report via the DPME/ Office of the Premier/ Departmental website. By making this information publicly available, the intention is to deepen the discussion and debate on evaluation practice and highlight evaluations practice that is above adequate standards. However, evaluations that are in the NEP, should only be made public once the final report has been approved by cabinet.

<b>Activity brief</b>	Administrator ensures the original evaluation report and quality assessment report are published online	<b>Time</b>	Within 2 weeks of the final quality assessment report
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**Signed**

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**Mr Tshediso Matona**  
**Acting Director-General**  
**Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation**  
**Date:**

## **Annexure A: A Specimen of an Interview Guide**

An Interview Guide is intended to assist the assessor with the semi-structured interviews that will be conducted with evaluation role-players, such as the programme manager, M&E manager/ advisor, the evaluator(s) and any other relevant evaluation stakeholder, such as a representative of the commissioning department.

The Interview Guideline is developed in such a way that the set of questions are generic and can be applied to all the evaluations under assessment. The interview questions are informed by the web assessment tool and should be used in conjunction with the tool to deepen and enrich the assessment and analysis.

In preparation for the interviews, it is important that the assessor familiarises him/ herself with the assessment standards and available evaluation documentation beforehand. This will assist in determining where the information gaps are and therefore which questions are more relevant and/or pertinent for a specific respondent.

These interviews are qualitative, experiential, and perception-based and in many instances based on historical information. Thus, the information gathered may include subjective views and opinions. These are important and relevant as they provide a sense of how role-players viewed the evaluation process and various project deliverables. Note that the questions also endeavour to gather factual information that provides a more objective account of the evaluations.

The way in which the Interview Guideline has been set up is that there are separate sets of questions for Programme Managers, M&E managers/advisors and the evaluators. While there is some repetition in some of the questions, they are targeted to the respective positions. Should another role-player be interviewed, it is recommended the assessor apply those questions deemed most appropriate from the following list.

Note: The set of interview questions is extensive. It is the responsibility of the assessor to determine what is relevant for the interview based on what information is available.

### **Guiding questions for the Programme Manager**

#### **Introduction**

As the assessor, introduce the assignment and the purpose of the interview. Emphasise that the interview is not designed in the *strict* sense of a question and answer interview, but is a conversation to enrich the understanding and analysis of the evaluation that is being assessed.



### ***Understanding the context/ background***

1. What prompted the evaluation?
2. What and who was involved in the decision-making process?
3. Was the evaluation an internal or external evaluation?

### ***Planning, design and inception***

1. Were the Terms of Reference (ToR) clear and well defined?
2. What were the levels of partnership and/or stakeholder involvement in the development of the ToR and the design of the evaluation?
3. Was a steering committee or any similar governance and management structure established for the evaluation?
4. In your view, were the resources allocated to the evaluation adequate? If not, why not and what could have been done differently?
5. In selecting the service provider appointed to undertake the evaluation, how important was content knowledge of the sector for the evaluation?
6. What was the context at the time of the evaluation?
  - a. Was the timing of the evaluation appropriate?
7. During the evaluation inception phase, were there changes or refinements made to the ToR i.e. the scope of work, methodology, time-frames, etc? Elaborate on these.

### ***Implementation***

  
**University of Fort Hare**  
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1. What mechanisms were in place to ensure the credibility and impartiality of the evaluation?
  - a. External evaluation: Was the evaluation team able to work freely and without interference?
  - b. Internal evaluation: Was any process undertaken to ensure the evaluation was impartial and credible? (A possible option for this is a peer review?)
2. Were stakeholders, including the clients and beneficiaries, consulted and given the opportunity to contribute during the evaluation process? If so, how?
3. Were the data and information collected appropriate and useful in terms of the programme?
4. What are some of the ethical considerations relevant to the sector?
  - a. Were participants involved in the evaluation sufficiently protected?
  - b. Were proper ethical standards and practice applied?
5. Was there a reporting protocol in place for interim and progress reporting?
6. To what extent were you involved in the management and oversight of the evaluation?

7. Was the evaluation conducted within the allotted time-frame and within budget?
  - a. In the event of changes to conditions, time-frames, budget, etc., how were these dealt with?

### **Reporting**

1. Did the report provide a clear sense of the data collected, the analysis, findings, conclusions, recommendations and limitations relevant to the programme?
2. Was the data analysis well executed in your opinion?
3. Were the findings based on sufficient evidence?
4. How relevant are the findings and recommendations to the current policy context?
5. Were stakeholders engaged to provide inputs into the evaluation report(s)? If so, to what extent were these incorporated?
6. Is the report accessible to the wider public i.e. in terms of its readability and appropriateness to different audiences?

### **Follow-up, use and learning**

1. To what extent has the evaluation been used to shape policy?
  - a. Are there clear policy changes proposed as a result of the evaluation?
2. Has the evaluation been circulated amongst staff?
  - a. How would you describe staff understanding of the evaluation?
3. How useful has the evaluation process, including the findings and recommendations, been for the programme?
  - a. Were programme staff consulted regarding the recommendations?
  - b. To what extent are programme staff committed to implementing the recommendations?
  - c. What is the
4. Can you give your impression on the quality of the evaluation overall?
5. What, in your view, worked well in the evaluation process overall?
6. What lessons can you share from the experiences gained through the evaluation process?

### **Guiding questions for the M&E manager/advisor**

#### **Introduction**

As the assessor, introduce the purpose of the quality assessment to the M&E manager/advisor. Emphasise that the interview is not designed in the *strict* sense of a question

and answer interview, but is a conversation to enrich the assessor's understanding and analysis of the evaluation that is being assessed.

### ***Understanding the context/ background***

1. What prompted the evaluation?
2. Who was involved in the decision-making process to undertake an evaluation?
  - a. To what extent was an M&E expert consulted?
3. Was the evaluation an internal or external evaluation?

### ***Planning and design***

1. Was the ToR clear and well defined?
  - a. Was the goal and purpose of the evaluation clear?
  - b. Were evaluation questions appropriate for the type of evaluation?
  - c. How well defined was the scope of work?
  - d. Were the timeframes realistic for the scale and type of evaluation?
2. Was the ToR appropriate for the type of evaluation that was selected?
  - a. What informed the choice of the type of evaluation?
3. Was the methodology appropriate for the type of evaluation selected?
4. What were the levels of partnership and/or stakeholder involvement in the development of the ToR and the design of the evaluation?
  - a. Was there any particular support in championing the evaluation?
  - b. Was there any resistance?
5. Was a steering committee or any similar governance and management structure established for the evaluation?
6. In your view, were the resources allocated to the evaluation adequate? If not, why not and what could have been done differently?
7. During the evaluation inception phase, were there changes or refinements made to the ToR i.e. the scope of work, methodology, time-frames, etc?

### ***Implementation***

1. What mechanisms were in place to ensure the credibility and impartiality of the evaluation?

- a. External evaluation: Was the evaluation team able to work freely and without interference? What was your role as M&E advisor?
  - b. Internal evaluation: Please explain your role in the internal evaluation? Was any process undertaken to ensure the evaluation was impartial and credible? Was the evaluation subjected to any form of peer review?
2. Were stakeholders, including the clients and beneficiaries, consulted and given the opportunity to contribute during the evaluation process?
3. Were the data and information collected appropriate and useful for the purpose of the evaluation?
4. Were participants involved in the evaluation protected, and were proper ethical standards and practice applied?
5. Was the evaluation conducted within the allotted time-frames and within budget?
  - a. What were the implications of the time-frames and resourcing on the evaluation in practice?
6. How would you describe the functioning of the steering committee?
7. Did the evaluation secretariat provide adequate support to the process? Why or why not?



### **Reporting**

1. Was there a reporting protocol in place for interim and progress reporting?
2. Did the report provide a clear sense of the data collected, the analysis, findings, conclusions, recommendations and limitations?
3. Was the data analysis well executed?
4. Were the findings based on sufficient evidence?
5. Did the conclusions adequately address the original research question(s)?
6. Was the evaluation design employed appropriate for arriving at the kind of conclusions and recommendations made?
7. Were acknowledgements of the limitations of the evaluation findings and conclusions made explicitly?

### **Follow-up, use and learning**

1. How well has the evaluation process lent itself to learning and skills development on the part of staff involved in the regular monitoring & reporting of the programme?

2. How has the evaluation report been received by the departmental/commissioning organisation stakeholders?
3. To what extent do you think this evaluation will shape policy and practice?
4. What lessons can you share from the experiences gained through the evaluation process?

## **Guiding questions for the Evaluator**

### **Introduction**

Introduce the assignment and the role of the assessor. Emphasise that the interview is not designed in the strict sense of a question and answer interview, but is a conversation to enrich the understanding and analysis of the evaluation that is being assessed.

### ***Understanding the context/ background***

1. Was there a clear understanding from the evaluation team on the background context to the evaluation, including the triggers that prompted the evaluation?
2. Had the evaluation team conducted any work in this sector or with this organisation prior to this assignment? If so, what?



### ***Planning, design and inception***

1. Were the Terms of Reference (ToR) clear and well defined?
2. Was the ToR appropriate for the type of evaluation that was selected?
3. Was the proposed methodology set out in the ToR appropriate for the type of evaluation selected?
4. Were the resources available to the evaluation adequate given the scope of the ToR?
5. During the evaluation inception phase, were there changes or refinements made to the evaluation design that differed in any way from the ToR? If so, what and why?

### ***Implementation***

1. Did you feel that there was sufficient independence in the evaluation process?
2. What was the level of support provided by the client?
3. In what way were stakeholders, including the clients and beneficiaries, consulted during the evaluation process?
4. Were there any challenges experienced in the application of the planned/suggested methods of data collection?

- a. What effect, if any, did this have on the evaluation?
5. Were data and information easily available?
  - a. What were some of the challenges/limitations?
6. What method was applied to analyse the data/information gathered?
  - a. How effective was it?
7. Were the instruments used in the evaluation effective?
  - a. Were they piloted prior to application?
8. Were participants involved in the evaluation protected, and were proper ethical standards and practice applied?
9. Was the evaluation conducted within the allotted time-frame and within budget?
  - a. In the event of changes to conditions, what did this mean for the evaluation team?
10. How would you describe the functioning of the steering committee?
11. Did the evaluation secretariat provide adequate support to the process? Why or why not



### **Reporting**

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1. Was there a reporting protocol in place for interim and progress reporting?
2. What was the approach and logic applied in presenting the evaluation results and compiling the final report?
  - a. Were any challenges encountered in compiling the final report? If so, what?
  - b. Was the draft report subjected to peer review before finalisation? If so, what were some of the issues raised by the peer reviewer?
3. What informed the recommendations that were made? How were these arrived at?
4. Were stakeholders engaged to provide inputs into the evaluation report(s) and to what extent were these incorporated?

### **Follow-up, use and learning**

1. To what extent was a transfer of skills incorporated into the evaluation process?
  - a. How successful was the evaluation in this regard?

2. Can you speak to the sense of ownership and confidence expressed by the commissioning organisation of the evaluation conclusion and recommendations?
3. What lessons can you share from the experiences gained through the evaluation process?



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