

A model to promote the effective use of evaluations in the South African agricultural sector

by

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Declaration

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Abstract

The study that is the focus of this dissertation assessed the applicability of Patton's utilisation-focused evaluation (UFE) approach to the South African agricultural sector in order to develop a model for the effective utilisation of evaluations in this sector. The agricultural sector was selected because, compared to most other sectors, it actively conducts evaluations, owing to its significant contribution to socioeconomic development and food security. Focus on the UFE approach is premised on the fact that it offers a detailed and practical approach to conducting evaluations with a focus on use. Moreover, the literature reveals strong advocacy of this approach. Central to the study are the following questions: (a) Why are evaluations not used? (b) What can be done to ensure that evaluations are used?

An analysis of the UFE approach and the practice of evaluations in South Africa revealed that while UFE remains a useful framework to enhance the use of evaluations, it requires adaptation to context, policies and practice in the agricultural sector. To gain deeper understanding and enhance the adapted model, an empirical study on the practice of evaluations in the agricultural sector was conducted. This was done through a comprehensive analysis of 10 purposefully selected evaluations and semi-structured interviews with key role players.

The empirical study found that evaluations are used inadequately, partially and anecdotally in the agricultural sector, with the exception of the Western Cape Department of Agriculture. Barriers to use in a departmental setting were identified as negative attitudes to evaluation; a lack of ownership, leadership and accountability on the part of programme managers; weak evaluation support structures; inadequate use of national evaluation systems; and a lack of integration of evaluation systems with other government systems, such as planning and budgeting. Barriers related to the evaluation process included a lack of the following: no programme theory of change; lack of programme data; inadequate evaluation questions; irrelevant evaluation recommendations; subjectivity; and too many recommendations.

The study led to the following recommendations to promote the use of evaluations:

- (a) Change the departmental evaluation culture
- (b) Institutionalise an accountability mechanism
- (c) Integrate evaluations with other systems of government
- (d) Strengthen evaluation support structures
- (e) Enforce the reporting of management improvement plans (MIPs)
- (f) Use external UFE experts to support evaluation planning
- (g) Clearly define primary intended users

Apart from contributing to an under-researched area in the field of evaluations, in general, and the practice of evaluations in South Africa, in particular, the study has led to the proposal of an important strategy for promoting the use of evaluations in the South African agricultural sector. Its key contribution has been the adaptation of Patton's UFE approach to provide a model for promoting the effective utilisation of evaluations in the South African agricultural sector. The 17 steps of the UFE approach have been adapted into 5 phases by removing steps that are not applicable, combining some steps and adding certain elements that are specific to the South African context. Principally the model entails an evaluation process that (a) is undertaken in a 5-phased process; (b) is supported by structural, accountability and system integration mechanisms; (c) is carried out in a receptive departmental evaluation culture.

Opsomming

Die studie wat die fokus van hierdie verhandeling is, het die toepaslikheid van Patton se aanwendingsgerigte evaluasie (AGE) -benadering tot die Suid-Afrikaanse landbousektor geassesseer ten einde 'n model vir die effektiewe aanwending van evaluasies in hierdie sektor te ontwikkel. Die landbousektor is gekies omdat dit, vergeleke met die meeste ander sektore, aktief evaluasies uitvoer, vanweë die beduidende bydrae daarvan tot sosio-ekonomiese ontwikkeling en voedselsekerheid. Fokus op die AGE-benadering veronderstel die feit dat dit 'n gedetailleerde en praktiese benadering tot die uitvoering van evaluasies met 'n fokus op gebruik bied. Boonop openbaar die literatuur sterk voorspraak vir hierdie benadering. Sentraal tot die studie is die volgende vrae: (a) Waarom word evaluasies nie gebruik nie? (b) Wat kan gedoen word om te verseker dat evaluasies gebruik word?

'n Ontleding van die AGE-benadering en die praktyk van evaluasies in Suid-Afrika het aan die lig gebring dat terwyl AGE 'n bruikbare raamwerk bly om die gebruik van evaluasies te bevorder, dit aanpassing by die konteks, beleide en praktyk in die landbousektor vereis. Om groter begrip te verkry en die aangepaste model te versterk, is 'n empiriese studie oor die praktyk van evaluasies in die landbousektor uitgevoer. Dit is gedoen by wyse van 'n omvattende ontleding van 10 doelgerig geselekteerde evaluasies en semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude met sleutel rolspelers.

Die empiriese studie het bevind dat evaluasies ontoereikend, gedeeltelik en anekdoties in die landbousektor gebruik is, met die uitsondering van die Wes-Kaapse Departement van Landbou. Struikelblokke by gebruik in 'n departementele omgewing is geïdentifiseer as negatiewe houdings tot evaluasie; 'n gebrek aan eienaarskap, leierskap en aanspreeklikheid aan die kant van programbestuurders; swak evaluasie-ondersteuningstrukture; onvoldoende gebruik van nasionale evaluasiesistelsels; en 'n gebrek aan integrasie van evaluasiesistelsels met ander regeringstelsels, soos beplanning en begroting. Struikelblokke verwant aan die evaluasieproses het 'n gebrek aan die volgende ingesluit: geen program-teorie van verandering nie; gebrek aan programdata; onvoldoende evaluasievrae; ontoepaslike evaluasie-aanbevelings; subjektiwiteit; en te veel aanbevelings.

Die studie het tot die volgende aanbevelings gelei om die gebruik van evaluasies te bevorder:

- (a) Verander die departementele evaluasie-kultuur.
- (b) Institutionaliseer 'n aanspreeklikheid-meganisme.
- (c) Integreer evaluasies met ander regeringstelsels.
- (d) Versterk evaluasie-ondersteuningstrukture.
- (e) Dwing die rapportering van bestuur-verbeteringsplanne (BVP'e) af.
- (f) Gebruik eksterne AGE-kundiges om beplanning van evaluasie te ondersteun.
- (g) Definieer primêre bedoelde gebruikers duidelik.

Benewens die bydrae van die studie tot 'n onder-nagevorste gebied op die terrein van evaluasies in die algemeen en die praktyk van evaluasies in Suid-Afrika in die besonder, het die studie tot die voorstel van 'n belangrike strategie vir die bevordering van die gebruik van evaluasies in die Suid-Afrikaanse landbousektor gelei. Die sleutelbydrae daarvan was die aanpassing van Patton se AGE-benadering om 'n model vir die bevordering van die effektiewe aanwending van evaluasies in die Suid-Afrikaanse landbousektor daar te stel. Die 17 stappe van die AGE-benadering is aangepas tot 5 fases deur ontoepaslike stappe te verwyder, sommige stappe te kombineer, en sekere elemente wat spesifiek in die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks is, by te voeg. Hoofsaaklik behels die model 'n evaluasieproses wat (a) in 'n proses met 5 fases onderneem word; (b) deur strukturele, aanspreeklikheid- en stelselintegrasie-meganismes ondersteun word; (c) en in 'n ontvanklike departementele evaluasiekultuur uitgevoer word.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AEA	American Evaluation Association
AG	Auditor-General
AGSA	Auditor-General of South Africa
AIU	Agribusiness Investment Unit
CASP	Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CDW	Community Development Workers
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CFE	Center for Education
CIPP	Context, Input, Process, and Product
CRDP	Comprehensive Rural Development Programme
DAFF	Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
DALRRD	Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development
DDG	Deputy Director General
DEP	Departmental Evaluation Plans
DEWG	Departmental Evaluation Working Group
DPME	Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
DPSA	Department of Public Service and Administration
DRDLR	Department of Rural Development and Land Reform
ECPE	Essential Competencies for Programme Evaluators
EE	Empowerment Evaluation
EMCDDA	European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction
ERU	Evaluation and Research Unit
EQPRS	Electronic Quarterly Performance Reporting System
FAO	Food and Allied Organisation
FMPPI	Framework for Managing Programme Performance Information
GAO	Government Accountability Office

GDARD	Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GWM&ES	Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation System
HET	Higher Education and Training
KEQ	Key Evaluation Questions
IEP	Interactive Evaluation Practice
INTRAC	International NGO Training and Research Centre
MAP	Market Access Programme
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MPE	Meliorative Participatory Evaluation
MPAT	Management Performance Assessment Tool
MRP	Market Readiness Programme
NDP	National Development Plan
NEPF	National Evaluation Policy Framework
NES	National Evaluation System
NT	National Treasury
NSG	National School of Governance
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
PEM	Participatory Evaluation Model
PCAS	Policy Coordination and Advisory Service
PIU	Primary Intended User
SAET	Structured Agricultural Education and Training
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation
STATS SA	Statistics South Africa
TBEs	Theory-Based Evaluations
TOR	Terms of Reference
TMR	Total Mixed Rations
UFE	Utilisation-Focused Evaluation

USA

United States of America

WCDaA

Western Cape Department of Agriculture

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The primary goal of the study, which is the focus of this dissertation, was to develop a model to promote the effective use of evaluations in the agricultural sector based on an assessment of the applicability of utilisation-focused evaluation (UFE) to the South African public sector. This chapter provides a framework of the study, as it examines the use of evaluations in the agricultural sector. In the study, the agricultural sector referred to national departments responsible for agriculture and the provincial departments of agriculture. It did not include the private agricultural sector in the form of agribusinesses, farmers unions or cooperatives; public entities; and local government, for example. Nonetheless, it must be emphasized that the study recognizes that to truly achieve the outcomes and impact desired in agriculture, the relationship between the private and public sector in agriculture remains important. Therefore, these specific participants/stakeholders were only excluded for the purposes of delimiting the area of study.

The purpose of the study was exploratory, as it explored a particular topic and developed a basic understanding of it (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:79). Exploratory research has been used to learn about new or relatively under-researched topics. It can help to fill a gap in “our knowledge about a new or under-researched topic or approach the topic from a different perspective to generate new and emerging insights” (Leavy, 2017:5). As the use of evaluations in the South African agricultural sector has not been extensively researched, there is a need for further research to fill the gap in the knowledge about this phenomenon with regard to particular contexts, institutions, role players and challenges, for instance.

The study involved applied research, which is essentially conducted to improve the quality of practice of a particular discipline (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:4). In the arena of public policy/management, applied researchers often hope that their output will be used by programme managers and decision-makers to improve programme implementation;

change its design; or even terminate it (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:4). Thus, the study sought to promote or improve the use of evaluations in the South African agricultural sector. Moreover, the study aimed to attract the interest of authorities in the South African public sector, who might find it useful.

1.2 Background to the Study

The term “evaluations” is defined by Rossi, Lipsey and Freeman (2004:02) “as a social science activity directed at collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and communicating information about the workings and effectiveness of social programmes”. Conducting evaluations has been a common practice since the end of the 1950s. In the 1960s and 1970s, there was a growing call for systematic evaluations of the effectiveness of government programmes (Patton, 2008:15). Thus, evaluation research gained momentum in the 1960s. Today, evaluations are widely practiced in the context of policymaking, programme management or client advocacy (Rossi *et al*, 2004:12). They serve the important purpose of producing information that enables stakeholders to make decisions about programme improvement, decision-making and accountability (Fleischer & Christie, 2009:158; Patton, 2012; Weiss, 1987).

However, despite the importance, optimism, and surge in studies on evaluations, concerns have been raised about the use of evaluations as early as the end of the 1960s (Patton, 2008:18). In fact, the debate about the use of evaluations is almost as old as the evaluation business itself (Lederman, 2012; Leviton & Hughes, 1981; Weiss, 1987). Many scholars have observed that evaluations are not being used (Fleischer & Christie, 2009:158; Hojlund, 2014:26); Leviton & Hughes, 1981:525). This has sparked a wave of examination of the use of evaluation; the factors that affect its use; and the types of use. A research conducted by Leithwood and Cousins (1986) identified at least 65 empirical studies on the use of evaluations between 1971 and 1985. Evaluation use is a growing research theme in the realm of evaluation studies, although there is no data to support this statement. However, a significant body of literature does support it, and calls have been made to expand this research.

In the context of South Africa, despite the significant development of the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system, there has been very limited research on the use of evaluations. Premised on an evolving M&E system, which is grounded in the 2011 National Evaluation Policy Framework (NEPF), an increasing number of government programmes are evaluated. Importantly, the NEPF has institutionalised evaluations through the development of National Evaluation Plans (NEP) and Provincial Evaluation Plans (PEP) that ensure that each year, identified major government programmes are evaluated at both the national and provincial sphere of government. According to the findings of a review conducted by the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME), at least 71 evaluations have been conducted in government since the 2011/12 financial year (DPME, 2020:1). At least 60 of these evaluations were completed and tabled in Cabinet (DPME, 2020:2). While this milestone is commendable, the impact (use) of these evaluations has not been determined (Goldman *et al*, 2015:5). Therefore, there is much to be explored and discovered about the use of evaluations in the South African public sector. In particular, the following questions need to be answered: What are the factors that affect the use of evaluations? What can be done to promote their use?

1.3 Problem Statement

Although it is generally expected that evaluations should be used in programme planning, improvement or even accountability, there is a scholarly narrative that proclaims that evaluations are disregarded by decision-makers and that they hardly change policies (Hojlund, 2014:26; Leviton & Hughes, 1981:525; Cook, 1978). Hojlund (2014) refers to this as the paradox of evaluation because although the very essence of evaluations is to improve policy, they are disregarded by policymakers. Consequently, the notion “use” remains an issue of concern in evaluation research (Leviton & Hughes, 1981:525; Patton & Alkin, 2004). There is a need to identify and understand factors that affect the use of evaluations and to propose ways in which it can be promoted. Thus, the study sought to respond to this need.

Because of the introduction of the National Evaluation Policy Framework (NEPF) in 2011, an increasing number of evaluations have been conducted in the South African public sector. In fact, the agricultural sector is one of the most active in evaluation practice, with

at least 29 evaluations conducted since 2011. While it is common knowledge that evaluations are being conducted, there is inadequate knowledge about their utilisation. A review of the literature on evaluations use in the South African public sector is inconclusive, as there are some good examples of utilisation and, equally, many instances of non-utilisation. More specifically there no empirical research on the use of evaluations in the South African agriculture sector.

Furthermore, concerned about evaluations not being used, leading scholars of evaluation have developed some prescriptive theories to promote the use of evaluations. A preliminary review of Alkin and Christie's (2004) study identified at least six theories of evaluation use taken from the evaluation theory tree that they developed. While these six theories may not be an exhaustive list, they point to a diverse, developing, and complex field. Key amongst these theories is UFE developed by Michael Patton. The key tenets of the South African National Evaluation System (NES) are influenced by or embedded in the UFE approach (Podems, Goldman & Jacobs, 2014:74). In addition, UFE is the most prominent theoretical explication of the utilisation (or use) of evaluations and provides the most practical guide for conducting evaluations with a focus on use (Alkin & Christie, 2004:48). It is for this reason that the South African NES seeks to emulate this approach.

However, despite being endorsed, evaluations in the South African public sector are not necessarily conducted in the true sense and spirit of UFE. The differences are found in (a) the planning and management of evaluations; (b) the evaluation culture; (c) the selection of primary intended users (PIUs); (d) evaluator competency; and (e) framework-related barriers. Most importantly, these differences do not necessarily mean that UFE is not applicable in South Africa but rather point to the need to adapt because the imperative for a model or framework that promotes the use of evaluations cannot be overemphasised. Hence, Peck and Gorzalski (2009:140) warn, "without such knowledge of how to make programme evaluation useful, the field, though important and necessary for development and success, may not continue to be valued in the public sector and non-profit sector". To be valued, such a model must be grounded in the context within which evaluations are conducted.

1.4 Research Question

The primary research question of the study was as follows:

What is needed to promote the effective use of evaluations in the South African agricultural sector?

The secondary research questions were as follows:

- (a) Can the utilisation-focused evaluation approach be applied to the South African agriculture sector to increase the use of findings?**
- (b) What factors affect the use of evaluations in the South African agricultural sector?**
- (c) How should these factors be considered when proposing an integrated model for evaluation use in the South African agricultural sector?**

1.5 Aims and Objectives

The aim of the study was to examine the applicability of Patton's UFE to the South African public sector and to develop a model to promote the effective utilisation of evaluation in the agricultural sector. The agricultural sector was selected as the focus of the study and as a detailed case analysis that tracked the reasons for use/non-use. The reasons for the selection of the agricultural sector are discussed in Chapter 5, which deals with the methodology and the design of the study.

The objectives of the study were to:

- Investigate the potential value/relevance of the utilisation-focused evaluation model within the context of the South African agricultural sector;**
- Identify the barriers to the use of evaluation in the South African public service, focusing on the agricultural sector;**
- Develop a model to promote the effective use of evaluations in the South African agricultural sector; and**

- **Contribute to the body of knowledge on the use of evaluations in the South African public sector.**

1.6 Rationale of the Study

The rationale for this study lies in its potential contribution to the body of literature on evaluation use particularly in the global south; the developing South African M&E system; and the question of the amount of resources spent on evaluations by governments. The complexity, challenges and debates around the matter of evaluation use make it an important object of exploration. Henry and Mark (2003:9) recognise this when they bemoan, “A serious shortage of rigorous, systematic evidence that can guide evaluation or that evaluators can use for self-reflection or for improving their next evaluation”. Consequently, the evaluation community has called for more research on the use of evaluations (Alkin, 2003; Fleischer & Christie, 2009).

Furthermore, the rationale of this study must be understood within the scholarly concern about the absence of evaluation theorists or creative contributions to, and innovations in evaluation from low- and middle-income countries and from Africa (Global South) (Carden & Alkin, 2012; Ofir, 2018). These countries are criticised for adopting western epistemological approaches to social inquiry that do not consider the local context, particularly culture (Chilisa et al, 2016:314). Consequently, there has been calls for adaptation of evaluation tools, instruments, strategies, theories, and models to ensure relevancy; and the development of novel evaluation practices, theories, and methodologies that emanate from local cultures and indigenous knowledge systems (Chilisa et al, 2016:316; Calden and Alkin, 2012). Accordingly, the empirical study on the use of evaluations in the South African agricultural sector was significant as it might contribute to the existing body of literature particularly in the Global South context.

Moreover, the South African M&E system is relatively new and developing. Therefore, it was important to examine the application of this system. In this respect, the study sought to reflect critically on the use of evaluation; identify barriers to its use; and develop a model to promote the effective use of evaluations. The model could potentially be used by the agricultural sector or even the broader public sector to promote the utilisation of

evaluations. In this regard, the study might contribute significantly to the evolution of the South African evaluation system. Consequently, the study might also contribute to an understanding of the use of evaluations in the agricultural sector, in particular, and the South African public sector, in general.

Alkin and Christie (2003:12) highlight the need to account for actions and resources used in the evaluation of programmes that are supported by government entities. Therefore, accountability is at the heart of the use of evaluations. The amount of money spent on designing and implementing socioeconomic interventions as well as resources and time utilized for evaluations, makes understanding the evaluation processes and the use of evaluations an issue of public interest (Peck & Gorzalski, 2009:140; Patton & Alkin, 2004:4). Spending public resources on evaluations that are not used is wasteful and fruitless. This is particularly so because “there is a normative expectation for evaluations to be used” (Ledermann, 2012:160). The intention is that decision-makers use evaluation findings and recommendations to inform decision-making and programme improvement (Fleischer & Christie, 2009:158).

When evaluations are used in an effective way, there can be significant improvements in education outcomes, the implementation of primary healthcare, or addressing household food insecurity. By not using evaluations in government, an important opportunity to improve the quality of public services is lost. Furthermore, evaluations facilitate transparency and promote accountability. When citizens know the true performance of a programme, they are able to hold public officials accountable. Therefore, the study of the use of evaluations was relevant and important because it was imperative to understand why evaluations are not used and to determine a model that might enhance their use.

1.7 Structure of dissertation

This dissertation is divided into eight chapters:

- Chapter 1 (Introduction) provides an introduction, background, and a roadmap for the study.

- Chapter 2 (Models and Theories of the Use of Evaluations) provides an overview of evaluation utilisation, focusing on the concept; a historical review; and key theories.
- Chapter 3 (Utilisation-Focused Evaluation) examines the utilisation-focused evaluation model and relates to the study objective “to investigate the potential value/relevance of the utilisation-focused evaluation model within the context of the South African agricultural sector”.
- Chapter 4 (Use of Evaluations in The South African Public Sector) examines the South African NES; the practice and use of evaluations; and the applicability of the UFE approach in the South African public sector. It is linked to the following objectives:
 - a) To investigate the potential value/relevance of the utilisation-focused evaluation model within the context of the South African agricultural sector
 - b) To identify the barriers to the use of evaluation in the South African public service, focusing on the agricultural sector
- Chapter 5 (Research Design and Methodology) provides an outline of the study design and methodology.
- Chapter 6 (Use of Evaluations in the Agricultural Sector) introduces the agricultural sector and examines the practice of evaluations in this context based on the literature review.
- Chapter 7 (Data Analyses and Findings) is linked to the following objectives:
 - a) To investigate the potential value/relevance of the utilisation-focused evaluation model within the context of the South African agricultural sector
 - b) To identify the barriers to the use of evaluation in the South African public service, focusing on the agricultural sector

Chapter 8 (Adapted Model to Promote the Effective Use of Evaluations) presents recommendations and the adapted model to promote the use of evaluations in the agricultural sector and relates to the following objective:

- To develop an adapted model that facilitates the use of evaluations in the South African agricultural sector

CHAPTER 2

MODELS AND THEORIES OF THE USE OF EVALUATIONS

2.1 Introduction

Despite focusing on the UFE approach, the research was rooted in the broad theme of the use of evaluations. Therefore, it is imperative to provide context to the chapters of the research that focus on this theme by tracing its evolution, unpacking the relevant concepts, and considering some of the key theoretical contributions. In so doing, this chapter is linked to the first objective, which was to investigate the potential value/relevance of the UFE model within the context of the South African agricultural sector.

To promote this objective, it is important to contextualise the UFE approach within leading evaluation theories and models. Therefore, this chapter reviews selected key use theorists based on Alkin's Evaluation Tree, a seminal publication that systematically classified evaluation theories. The conclusion of this chapter explains the relevance of adopting UFE as a model to promote evaluation use, with the subsequent chapter exploring its value in practice.

2.2 Evolution of the Study of Evaluation Use

The contestation of what the use of an evaluation really entails has made it complex to develop a singular definition. It has been broadly accepted in the literature that the concept "use" is "a multi-dimensional phenomenon best described by the interaction of several dimensions" and that it cannot be singularly defined (Shulha & Cousins, 1997:196; Braskamp, 1982:171). In fact, Alkin and King (2017:436) assert that traditionally, most authors have not provided any specific definition of use but have rather reflected on elements that count as use. Some of the more precise definitions have tended to centre on a specific type of evaluation. Alkin and King (2017:437) describe the prevalent definitions as disparately pointing to diverse approaches in delineating this notion.

Nevertheless, the notion of evaluation use has been a point of interest almost for as long as evaluation has been practised (Alkin & King, 2016: 569; Ledermann, 2012:159; Preskill & Torres, 2000:25). What makes use a core construct in the field of evaluation is that evaluations are conducted with the primary purpose of informing decisions about the worth or merit of an evaluand, which is the subject (programme/system) of evaluation (Henry & Mark, 2015:293; Alkin & King, 2017; Weiss, 1973). Consequently, it makes sense that throughout the life of evaluations, practitioners would concern themselves with whether their work is used or not. It is for this reason that the history of evaluation use becomes part of the general history of programme evaluation (Alkin & King, 2016:569). Evaluation, defined as the “judgment of merit and worth” by Scriven (1967), follows two streams. The first stream, which focuses on tests and measurements, is renowned in the education field, while the second stream, which focuses on the use of social research methodology, is used in field of social science (Alkin & King, 2016: 569).

The concern about evaluation use initially developed in the United States of America (USA) during the 1960s (Patton, 2008:14; Alkin & Taut, 2003:01). While a few evaluations can be traced to the aftermath of the World War II in the 1930s and 1950s, demand for systematic evaluation of the effectiveness of government programmes grew in the 1960s and 1970s (Patton, 2008:15). During this period, there was a massive growth in evaluation research prompted by the federal war on poverty programmes and an increase in federal funding for research on social programmes (Rossi *et al.*, 2004:9; Patton, 2008:14). For instance, the federal health interventions of the Great Society programmes, which included community mental health centers, were mandated to undergo evaluations estimated at between one and three percent of programme budgets (Patton, 2008:16). This was accompanied by legislative requirements and other mandatory requirements for end of year evaluation reports (Alkin & King, 2016:571). The 1960s and 1970s are described as an epoch of swift social and economic change due to the magnitude of the programmes implemented at that time.

Similarly, this tenure was marked by the recognition of the rationality of the social sciences to provide data for planning and the theoretical basis for policymaking (Patton, 2008; Weiss, 1979:426). Limited resources to do all that is needed to be done and the fact that

more than just money was required to solve complex human and social problems were the two lessons from the massive social experimentation and government intervention that gave birth to programme evaluation as a distinct field of professional practice (Patton, 2008:16). More specifically, evaluations were born out of the need to establish the basis of prioritising interventions in the midst of competing demands. Accordingly, there was a surge in the number of evaluations conducted in the 1960s, effectively resulting in evaluation research becoming a growth industry. In the beginning, evaluations were used to guide funding decisions and later on to help improve programme implementation (Patton, 2008:17).

The optimism about the rationality of the social sciences and the surge in evaluations did not last for a long time. Patton (2008:18) notes that it became apparent by the end of the 1960s, that the Great Society evaluations were generally disregarded or politicised. Other scholars and practitioners also bemoaned the non-use of research efforts and policymaking that often contradicts research findings (Bogenschneider & Corbitt, 2010; Gray & Lowery, 2000; Knorr, 1980). Similarly, some studies conducted on use pointed to a common failure of evaluations to influence decision-making in any meaningful way (Wholey *et al.*, 1970; Weiss, 1972). This led to calls for empirical evaluation of evaluations research (Weiss, 1972:319).

The drive to conduct further research on use was sparked by the perception that knowledge had a limited impact on policymaking (Weiss, 1989). At the heart of the issue was the disturbing disconnect between the research community (knowledge producers), and the policymaking community (knowledge consumers) (Bogenschneider & Corbitt, 2010). This is where the notion of evidence-based policymaking is located, which essentially means that policy or decision-making should be based on evidence (Davies, 2012:41). In this case, evidence refers to the knowledge that is generated by applied research and is derived from studies conducted inside and/or outside of government (Head, 2008:4). It includes a general account of social/organisational phenomena and specific evidence generated through performance indicators and programme evaluation (Head, 2008:4). Examples are expert knowledge; published research; existing research; stakeholder consultations; previous policy evaluations; the Internet; outcomes from

consultations; costing of policy options; output from economic; and statistical modelling (United Kingdom Cabinet Office, 1999:33).

The notion that reliable knowledge (evidence) is a key input to policymaking is not new (Head, 2010:78; Nutley, Davies & Walter, 2002:1). However, in the 1990s, there was a heightened emphasis of evidence-based policymaking, resulting in the establishment of units for policy analysis and the commissioning of evidence-based consultancy reports (Head, 2008:3). Although the UK's Modernising Government White Paper is generally recognised for escalating this approach by indicating that government policy must be evidence-based, this notion can be found worldwide (Davies, 2012:42). The growth of evidence-based tendencies within government agencies coincided with the public sector's greater interest in efficiency and effectiveness" (Head, 2008:2). However, more specifically, the factors that led to a rise in evidence-based decision-making include an increase in a more affluent, conscious, and informed public as well as an upsurge in the availability of data of all types. Other factors are an expansion in the size and capabilities of the research community and an intensified focus on scrutiny and accountability in government (Nutley *et al.*, 2002: 2).

Amidst the wealth of literature on knowledge utilisation in general, attention has been drawn to the difference between programme evaluation and social research commonly conducted in government (Alkin & King, 2016: 573). More specifically, a distinction has been made between studies designed for the primary purpose of adding value to the body of knowledge (research) or conclusion-orientated investigations, and those aimed at providing information to policymakers, in the form of evaluations, for example, also referred to as decision-orientated studies (Alkin & Daillak, 1979:13; Cronbach & Suppes, 1969). An appreciation of this distinction presupposes that there is strong need for concern when evaluations are not used because this defeats their intended purpose. Essentially, the argument is that unlike research, evaluation is conducted with the primary intention of informing decision-making or providing information for action; therefore, it should be of great concern when it is not used. Nonetheless, research on knowledge utilisation became key to understanding the concept of evaluation use because its ideas did not only have a significant impact but also acted as a catalyst for research on the use

of evaluation by scholars in both streams (conclusion-orientated and decision-orientated studies) (Alkin & King, 2016: 569).

It is also imperative to observe that an account for evaluation theory and practice is almost exclusively a Global North perspective. In fact, “at the moment all evaluation theories and nearly all evaluation practices have their origins in the West, in particular in the US, UK, Europe and Australia” (Ofir, 2018). Although today evaluation is practised in a multicultural and globalized world the extent to which it engages with its multicultural and diverse participants has been increasingly contested (Mbava, 2019:13). This is despite the fact that evaluations are not culturally neutral because “evaluation is about values, and what is evaluated depends upon the realities that are seen, what is considered valuable knowledge, and for whom that knowledge is valuable” (Chilisa, 2015; Chilisa, Major, Gaotlhobogwe, and Mokgolodi, 2016). Instead, evaluation practice is dominated by a perspective which often times ignores the context and culture within which the evaluation was conducted (Chilisa, 2015:07).

Underlining this conundrum is the potential differences in a global-South versus global-North viewpoint on what evidence is, and how it should be used. Since evaluations are not culturally neutral, the evidence that gets the most attention is that one that serves the agenda of the prevailing perspective. As argued by Chilisa (2015) what is evaluated depends upon the realities that are seen, what is considered valuable knowledge, and for whom that knowledge is valuable. Therefore, the dominance of the global north perspective and the use of evaluations primarily as an accountability mechanism, results in the prioritization of evidence that can be used for this purpose. Thus, in developing countries, evaluation has been described as “the worst instrument of epistemological imperialism: an attempt to determine the kinds of facts to be gathered, the appropriate techniques for gathering and theorizing the data, and the generation of reports based on these marginalizing research processes” (Chilisa *et al*, 2016:314).

There is a call for evaluations that employ the principles that consider the history, culture, values, worldviews, philosophies, and belief systems, that inform indigenous experiences

(Chilisa *et al*, 2016; Cloete, 2016). For instance, the use of African rooted evaluation approaches can help “evaluators to evaluate with cultural lens that focus on African values, beliefs system, customs, ways of knowing, and ways of constructing knowledge” (Gaotlhobogwe, Major, Koloi-Keaikitse, and Chilisa, 2018:51). In these approaches the indigenous people are not mere informants in knowledge generation but are coproducers of knowledge. They fully participate in the data analysis as people who understand and can interpret the language, idioms, and proverbs of the local people (Chilisa *et al*, 2016:321). Importantly, the African approach is said to be providing multiple ways of knowing which are not accommodated in the Eurocentric paradigms. In summary:

- Western ontology is based on one reality, whilst African ontology is based on multiple realities. Africans believe in the living and non-living (ancestors).
- Relational epistemology: knowledge is a community property that is passed on from one generation to another through songs, stories, poems, proverbs, folklores.
- Relational Axiology: African ethics are based on the respect, reciprocity, responsibility to the other, and the rights of the researched (underpinned by the principle of Ubuntu). (Gaotlhobogwe *et al*, 2018).

It is in this context that the global domination of Western approaches to programme evaluation in non-western countries has come under heavy scrutiny (Cloete, 2016:55). In the African context evaluation is donor driven and the accountability mechanisms tend to be directed towards recipients of aid rather than both recipients and the providers of aid (Chilisa, 2015:08). There has been more focus on program evaluation outcomes as defined by the sponsors at the expense of the beneficiaries views on what counted as valuable program outcomes Chilisa, 2015:07). Consequently, it is argued that the dominant Global North paradigm has not been optimally useful to African policy makers and that it requires contextualization to be more suitable to African conditions, cultures and institutions (Cloete, 2016:61; Mbava, 2019:13).

It is against this backdrop, that there has been a call for evaluation practice that is driven from an African perspective, a phenomenon described as ‘Made in Africa Evaluation’ (Chilisa, 2015; Mbava, 2019; Ofir, 2018). The ‘Made in Africa Evaluation’ must be

understood in a broader call for decolonization of evaluation discourse in the Global South. This has been defined as “the restructuring of power relations in the global construction of evaluation knowledge production, such that the African people may actively participate in the construction of what is evaluated, when it is evaluated, by whom, and with what methodologies” (Chilisa *et al*, 2016:316). In this respect, Global South evaluators have also been urged to build evaluation by originating evaluation practice and theories rooted in their cultural contexts (Calden & Alkin, 2012).

2.2.1 Three Phases of Evolution

The development of the study of evaluation use can be understood by relying on the work of Herbert (2014). In this work, the evolution of the study of use is based on three phases, namely (a) use/utilisation (1970-1986); (b) evaluation use/impact (1986-2000); and (c) evaluation influence (2000-to present). There is a close correlation between the evolution of the field of evaluation use and the development/conceptualisation of the types of uses. For instance, the traditional three types of uses related mainly to the first phase of the evolution, while in later phases, process use and the influence of evaluations became more relevant. Accordingly, the discussion below links the three phases of evolution with the types of use of evaluation.

2.2.1.1 The First Phase (1970-1986)

During the first phase (use/utilisation), use was considered primarily based on its direct impact on decision-making (Herbert, 2014:389). A typical example is studies that often-simplified use by merely examining the uptake of recommendations of an evaluation (Herbert, 2014:389). In this phase, evaluation studies were guided by three types of evaluation use, namely instrumental, conceptual, and persuasive use.

a) Instrumental Use

Instrumental use refers to the use of evaluation results (findings and recommendations) or information related to the outcome of the evaluation (data and interpretations) to make

a decision about the programme being evaluated (Weiss, 1998:21; Cousins & Leithwood, 1986:332; Greene, 1988; Shulha & Cousins, 1997). In the context of the government sector, instrumental use would mean using evaluation to give direction to policy and practice (Weiss *et al.*, 2005:13). This simply means that policymakers would consider the data and results of an evaluation, and then do what it indicates or recommends (Weiss *et al.*, 2005:13). Key to instrumental use is that stakeholders are able to cite and document the specific way an evaluation was used in decision-making (Leviton & Hughes, 1981:528). The emphasis is that evaluation is used when decisions or specific actions are taken based on the results of an evaluation.

However, Weiss *et al.*, (2005:13) contest that pure instrumental use is uncommon because most studies are not used as the explicit and express basis of decision-making. Furthermore, many writers appreciate and emphasise that use does not necessarily mean that there is immediate decision-making or implementation of recommendations (Braskamp, 1982; Cousins & Leithwood, 1986:336) These authors contest that the processing of evaluation information through serious consideration or discussion of results by primary programme stakeholders, is in itself an important form of use. It is acknowledged that a discussion of evaluation results may reject, amend or even postpone the implementation of recommendations. In some instances, the organisation might not even be in a position to make an immediate decision about the results. However, the fact that the results are adequately discussed by relevant people (primary stakeholders) points to use.

b) Conceptual Use

However, there is also recognition that the use of an evaluation should not be confined to the application of results, findings or recommendations through decision-making or discussion and that it should also incorporate enlightenment or conceptual use. In particular, reference is made to lessons learned through the evaluation process and the impact of the gathered information on a programme and an organisation. Moreover, ideas and insights generated through the evaluation and the influence that the evaluation has on the people and programme being evaluated are emphasised (Henry & Mark,

2003:294; Ledermann, 2012:159; Weiss, 1998:21; Alkin & Taut, 2003:1). This conceptual use means that while no direct action emanates from the evaluation, participants' conception of the programme is shaped (Johnson *et al.*, 2009:378). In addition, conceptual use implies that the views of stakeholders (often policymakers) about an issue are affected without this being necessarily recorded or documented in any specific way (Leviton & Hughes, 1981:528; Weiss, 1998). Therefore, while the emphasis of instrumental use is on decision-making, conceptual use accentuates enlightenment and lessons learned from the evaluation.

Both instrumental and conceptual uses have been criticised. For instance, although instrumental use requires the documentation of application, not every case of use is documented. For example, as Leviton and Hughes (1981:530) point out, "evidence of utilization within closed meetings, or a single individual's choice amongst alternatives, may exist nowhere in writing". Therefore, while the operational requirement of instrumental use is documentation, this is not always the case. Moreover, converse to common conjecture, conceptual use may be documented (Leviton & Hughes, 1981:530). Furthermore, the difference between instrumental and conceptual use is complicated by the long time it takes to define problems in the public sector and the fact that decisions are based on an integrated set of information from many sources (Rein & White, 1977). This obfuscates the determination of where conceptual use ends and where instrumental use begins.

c) *Persuasive Use*

Persuasive or symbolic use involves using evaluation evidence in an endeavor to influence others to support or defend a political position from attack (Leviton & Hughes, 1981:528). In persuasive or symbolic use, the evaluation is used to justify what decision-makers want to do anyway (Weiss *et al.*, 2005:13). Persuasive use is the most controversial of all the types of use. Consequently, there is no common understanding of what should be regarded as persuasive or symbolic use (Fleischer & Christie, 2009:159).

For instance, while the potential constructiveness and legitimacy of persuasive use is recognised, it is also argued to be an "undesirable and simulated form of use" (Leviton &

Hughes, 1981:530). In fact, researchers have contested that “using research to delay action, to allow policymakers to appear concerned about a problem, or to jockey for political position are not instances of utilization at all” (Pelz, 1978; Weiss, 1977). Nevertheless, it is accepted that persuasive use can also be constructive and legitimate (Weiss, 1977).

2.2.1.2 Second Phase (1986-2000)

While the earlier conceptualisation of use was valuable, its limitations and studies conducted on them pointed to a need to consider use in a much broader and comprehensive way. Importantly, consolidated research knowledge of key issues of consideration by the evaluation community was produced by Cousins and Leithwood’s (1986) study, which reviewed empirical research in light of the results of the use of evaluation over a period of 15 years (since 1971) (Herbert, 2014:391). The study brought to the fore subtler effects of use, such as support for discrete decisions; education for decision-makers; use as constituted by psychological processing; and potential use (Cousins & Leithwood, 1986). The future development of the influence framework commenced at this point (Herbert, 2014:391).

With evaluators trying to posit and discern the delicate influences of evaluation findings and processes, the context of evaluations became a central focus in the second phase (evaluation use/impact) (Herbert, 2014:391). Amongst other determinants, the Patton and Weiss debate were the key influences of this period. Weiss (1988) promoted the evaluator’s acceptance of organisational decision-making reality with a focus on delivering sensible evaluations and instrumental use, without using it as an indicator of the success or quality of an evaluation (Herbert, 2014:392). However, Patton (1988) advocates, “Evaluators should actively engage in fostering the usefulness of evaluation by delivering the information and processes that meet the needs of the commissioners of the evaluation” (Herbert, 2014:392).

Conceptual use is closely related to the later development of the type of use known as process use. The latter is defined as “individual changes in thinking and behavior and programme or organisational changes in procedures and culture that occur amongst

those involved in evaluation as a result of learning that occurs during the evaluation process” (Patton, 1997:90). The primary difference between the earlier types of use and process use is that they focused on the use of evaluation findings, while process use was centred on lessons learned in the whole value chain of an evaluation (Alkin & Taut (2003:06). Moreover, an important distinction is that process use recognises that the process of evaluation may highlight or provide important lessons that can affect the people and organisations that are being evaluated. However, the emphasis is on change in individual or organisational behavior, rather just the lessons learned.

In process evaluation, it is assumed that participation in an evaluation (process) can have an effect on behavior that is similar to that of any recommendation or report (Herbert, 2014: 392; Henry & Mark, 2003). It was for this reason that process use was included in the taxonomy of forms of use (Henry & Mark, 2003:294). Forss, Rebien and Carlsson (2002) propose five different types of process use identified as follows:

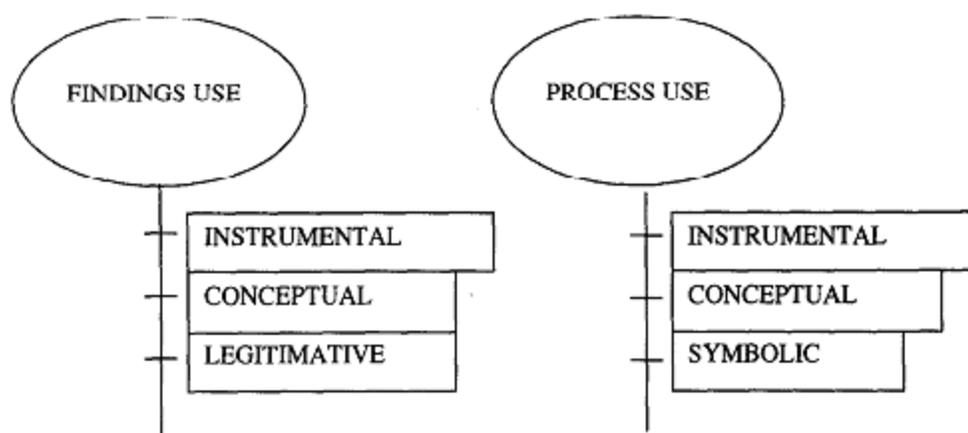
- Learning to learn
- Developing networks
- Creating shared understanding
- Strengthening the project
- Boosting morale

However, Kirkhart (2000:6) argues that process use is only a partial solution because it continues the construct of underrepresentation that it had sought to correct. Its main deficiency is that while it expands the taxonomy of evaluation use, it fails to accommodate the involuntary results and the measured occurrence of impact over time. In fact, Alkin and Taut (2003:6) contest placing process use on the same level as the established three types of use, on the basis that the process can also be used instrumentally, conceptually, or symbolically, as depicted in Figure 3.1 below.

Figure 3.1 below shows that process use can be used instrumentally when an evaluator’s probe of a programme leads to reviews, re-examinations or adjustments of the programme (Alkin & Taut, 2003:6). The process may be used conceptually when attitudes

of participants and stakeholders about the programme or the evaluation transform due their participation and experience of the evaluation process. Similarly, the sheer process of evaluation can be used to persuade others to support or defend a particular political disposition (symbolic use). This demonstrates that the established three types of use and process use are not mutually exclusive but rather interrelated.

Figure 2.1: Types of Evaluation Use



Source: Alkin and Taut (2003:8)

2.2.1.3 Third Phase (2000-Present)

The conundrums of the Second Phase resulted in the introduction of the notion of evaluation influence in 2000, when evaluators started considering evaluation influence frameworks as possible successors to theories of use (Herbert, 2014:393). The distinguishing feature of this period is that the narrative moved from use to influence. According to Kirkhart (2000:07), influence is more encompassing than use because it generates a framework that is useful in examining effects that are “multidimensional, incremental, unintentional, and non-instrumental, alongside those that are unidirectional, episodic, intended, and instrumental (represented by the term ‘use’)”. In this respect Kirkhart (2000), who is also a key theoretical contributor to the notion of influence, propositioned an integrated theory that conceptualises evaluation influence in terms of three dimensions:

- Source: the active agent of change or the starting point of a generative process of change
- Intention: the presence of a purposeful direction to apply a specific form of influence through the evaluation process or findings
- Time: reflection on the influence that happens immediately, at the end of a cycle and long term (Kirkhart, 2000:09)

Another contributor to the theory of evaluation influence is Henry and Mark (2003:295). They propositioned that evaluation influence disregards outcomes that have no bearing on social betterment and rather focusses on the category of consequences that could possibly lead towards or away from social betterment.

Nevertheless, there has also been some criticism leveled against the theory of evaluation influence. For example, it has been branded as unhelpful, owing to the inclusion of external elements beyond the control of the evaluator (Hebert, 2014:395). In addition, the notion of social betterment as the primary purpose of an evaluation is argued to be impractical, with programme improvement being the preferred purpose (Hebert, 2014:395). Therefore, while evaluation influence theory is recognised as a developed and nuanced framework, it remains contested in the field of evaluation (Herbert, 2014:395).

It is also important to point out that Kirkhart (2000) does not propose influence as a substitute for the notion of use. Instead, she argues that “the question of how and to what extent evaluations shape, affect, support, and change persons and systems can only be adequately addressed by broadening the understanding of the impact of evaluation from narrowly defined use to influence” (Alkin & Taut, 2003:8). Therefore, the importance of the use of an evaluation remains, with the main addition being the focus on other elements (such as influence) or ways in which an evaluation may be used.

2.3 Determination of Use

In order to reconcile the diverse definitions, some of the writers developed conditions under which an evaluation might have been used. Alkin and King (2017) developed five

matrices of the Guttman's mapping sentence for instances of use. Firstly, the evaluation findings or its process and information or understandings derived as a consequence of participating in the evaluation are considered as the stimulus that leads to potential use (Alkin & King, 2017:437). The second matrix involves the reaction of potential users (interested primary users, other local users and external users) to the stimulus by seriously considering the evaluation information or process (Alkin & King, 2017:437). Interested primary users (stakeholders closer to the programme) are the key focus, owing to their potential ability to make decisions about the programme (Alkin & King, 2017:437).

In the third matrix, three types of influence are presented as ways through which an evaluation may affect a programme. It may do so as a dominant influence, such as in the case of instrumental use, where users seriously consider the final report including the findings and recommendations (Alkin & King, 2017:438). Furthermore, evaluation may serve as one of multiple influences at a given time. This type of influence recognises that evaluation is not the sole input to programme decision-making, as there may be a multiplicity of potential inputs to decisions (Alkin & King, 2017:438). Lastly, evaluation may be one of multiple and cumulative influences by, for instance, confirming findings of a previous report (Alkin & King, 2017:438). This may influence the organisation to take action.

The fourth matrix relates to the aspect of the programme being considered. In this respect, potential users may consider information pertaining to (1) the programme holistically, (2) any of its elements, or (3) the performance of people responsible, associated or working within the programme (Alkin & King, 2017:439). The fifth matrix relates to purpose, explained as several different actions to which the use of evaluation information and its potential use may relate. These include (a) making decisions, (b) the formation of attitudes, (c) the justification of prior decisions or actions, or (d) an individual's or an organisation's evaluation capacity building (Alkin & King, 2017:439).

Apart from Alkin and Taut's (2017) five matrices, Leviton and Hughes (1981) suggest at least two conditions under which an evaluation has been definitely used. Firstly, they point to a serious discussion of the results and debates about a particular policy or programme.

In the second place, “there must be evidence that in the absence of the research information, those engaged in policy or programme activities would have thought or acted differently” (Leviton & Hughes, 1981:527). However, these conditions may present at least two difficulties. Firstly, how serious is the discussion of the results? Secondly, how can it be predicted with certainty that stakeholders would have acted differently in the absence of an evaluation? In fact, Alkin and Taut (2017) note that it would be extremely difficult to answer these questions.

Furthermore, Braskamp (1982:171) asserts that use can be measured by the presence of any of the following conditions:

- (a) allocative, direct use whereby information is used in decision-making
- (b) conceptual enlightenment whereby new lessons are learned
- (c) change in organisational policies and practices due to the threat of an evaluation
- (d) impact on the management of the organisation

Key to this broad definition is the incorporation of both individual and organisational uses.

2.4 Users of Evaluation

Evaluations are used by different people and organisations for diverse reasons. Firstly, there are at least three users of evaluations, namely primary users, local users and clients of the programme. Primary users are “the stakeholders most closely associated with the programme who are potentially able to make decisions based upon the information” (Alkin & Taut, 2017:437). These include programme sponsors, programme directors and perhaps programme practitioners (Weiss, 1998:27). In donor dependent countries of the Global South, the primary users are the donor funders who uses evaluation to mainly hold the recipients of funding accountable (Chilisa, 2015). Secondly, evaluations are used by local users who are essentially personnel responsible for managing and implementing a programme (Alkin & Taut, 2017:437). Thirdly, evaluations may be used by the clients or beneficiaries of the programme (Weiss, 1998:27; Alkin & Taut, 2017:438). For an example, in the case of this research the beneficiaries or clients of agriculture programmes are farmers.

Furthermore, there is a host of external individuals and groups that may use an evaluation. This includes managers of other similar programmes who can draw lessons on good practice or benchmark their programmes; the organisations that are inclined to learning; and the affluent and conscious public (Weiss, 1998:28; Alkin & Taut, 2017). Informed members of the public may use an evaluation to hold government accountable or to even lobby for certain policy perspectives.

Agencies that fund or support a programme are also an important external user of an evaluation. In the case of the public sector, this may be a department responsible for finance or even a parliamentary committee responsible for oversight on the finances of the state. Both may use an evaluation to hold a department accountable and make decisions about the future funding of a programme.

In summary, Table 2.1 below presents the users of evaluations based on the reviewed literature.

Table 2.1: Users of Evaluations

	User	Possible Uses
Primary users	Management/Directors	Decision-making, planning, and programme improvement
	Organisation/department that commissioned evaluation	Learning, transformation, decision-making
Local users	Programme staff	Implementation, management, and learning
Clients of the programme	Beneficiaries of services from the programme	Accountability
External users	Managers of similar programme	Learning and programme improvement
	Learning organisations	Learning and programme improvement

	The informed members of the public	Accountability, lobbying
	Programme funders	Accountability and decision-making on funding

Source: Researcher's own compilation

2.5 Factors that affect use

There is a variety of factors that may affect evaluation use. In this chapter these factors are not discussed in detail but rather summarised. Apart from discussing the specific factors that affect use, some of the literature has sought to categorise the different factors. Significantly, in an analysis of 65 empirical studies of evaluation use, Cousins and Leithwood (1986:332) conclude that “any given factor proposed or shown to influence evaluation use can be viewed as belonging to one of two major categories: (a) characteristics of the evaluation implementation and (b) characteristics of the decision or policy setting”. They identified six factors under each category. The evaluation implementation factors are identified as evaluation quality; credibility; relevance; communication quality; findings; and timeliness (Cousins & Leithwood, 1986). The decision-making or policy-setting factors are information needs; decision characteristics; political climate; competing information; personal characteristics; user commitment; and/or receptiveness to evaluation (Cousins & Leithwood, 1986).

The two classes of factors leading to non-use, as identified by Weiss (1972), also fall within the categories proposed by Cousins and Leithwood (1986). Weiss (1972) presents organisational systems and the current state of evaluation practice as two classes of factors leading to non-use. In the first place, evaluations are conducted amidst contending influences in an organisation that may override it. These influences include conservatism and inertia; costs; ideological doctrines; and so on. This falls under the decision-making or policy setting factors identified by Cousins and Leithwood (1986). The second issue is the capacity of evaluators to produce quality and reputable evaluations. This falls under the characteristics of evaluation implementation indicated by Cousins and Leithwood (1986).

In research conducted on process use, Preskill *et al.* (2003) developed five categories of variables that appear to affect process use. They entail the following:

- Facilitation of evaluation processes that assess how stakeholder meetings are conducted and the type of facilitator
- Evaluations that have management support
- Advisory group characteristics that make the group gel
- Frequency, methods, and quality of communications
- An organisation's characteristics, including the culture and previous experience evaluations (Preskill *et al.*, 2003:433-434)

Furthermore, Alkin and Taut (2003) suggest human and contextual factors as the two broad categories that affect use. The human factors include the attributes of both the evaluator and user, including the user's identity; organisational responsibility; and several characteristics of personal and professional style (Alkin & Taut, 2003:5). The contextual factors refer to the situation or background of the programme being evaluated.

Leviton and Hughes (1981) as well as Johnson *et al.* (2009) suggest that the main factors that positively affect use include the following:

- Persistent advocacy by a key individual
- Commitment of an individual decision-maker
- Good communications between the evaluator and the evaluation stakeholders
- Credibility of the evaluator
- Relevance (practicality and timeliness) of the evaluation
- Stakeholder participation.

In the absence of these factors, the evaluation would most likely not be used.

2.5.1 Evidence-Based Policy Barriers

In the realm of evidence-based policymaking, there is extensive discussion about barriers to the use of evidence. While the discussion is broader than that about the use of evaluations, the identified barriers to use are relevant and useful in the examination of the use of evaluations, particularly in the public sector. Therefore, it is appropriate to reflect on some of these barriers.

Although the case for the use of evidence in decision-making has been generally established, in practice, this principle is not always applied (Glennerster, 2012; Head, 2010:8). There are number of barriers to the use of evidence in decision-making. In the first place, there are multiple factors other than evidence that influence decision-making. They include value systems; beliefs and ideology; and the experience, expertise, and judgement of policymakers (Davies, 2004:42; Head, 2010). In the main, policymaking is value- driven rather outcome-based (Rutter, 2012).

This also brings to the fore the role of politics in policymaking. Policy makers who are primarily political representatives are required to be responsive to those who elected them. Therefore, a dilemma arises when research or evaluation recommends policies that are contrary to the wish of the electorate (Rutter, 2012:18). It is for this reason that Head (2008:5) argues correctly that some policy positions “are ‘data proof’ or ‘evidence proof’ because their evidence base has been narrowed and buttressed by political commitments that are linked to values and ideological positions of political leaders and parties”. Therefore, for evaluation evidence to be effective in influencing policymaking, it must be congruent with these factors.

In the second place, the notion of evidence is besieged by the issue of plurality of meaning. There is no universal understanding of what evidence means amongst researchers and decision-makers. For instance, policymakers in Canada are said to understand evidence as anything that establishes a fact or gives reason for believing something colloquially, while most researchers view it as the use of systematic, replicable methods of production scientifically (Davies, 2012:42). In some instances, informal knowledge gained from work experience or service is counted as evidence, while in fields

such as health in the UK, there is an established hierarchy of evidence for assessing what works (Nutley, *et al.*, 2002:02). It has also been suggested that government departments seem to use a more limited range of evidence in the form of international research and statistics, policy evaluation, economic modelling and expert knowledge (Bullock *et al.*, 2021). These issues point to the plurality of the meaning of evidence.

Thirdly, how the evidence is received and processed (demand-side) presents another challenge. In particular, it is argued that public servants lack the skills, behavior and culture to facilitate a more analytical approach to government problem solving (Rutter, 2012:18). Factors, such as physical and cognitive access to research, educational backgrounds and direct access to academic researchers, affect the absorptive capacity of civil servants to seek and use research evidence (Head, 2008:42).

There are also supply-side barriers, such as the presentational format of research findings, (which are often characterised as being too long, too dense, too methodological and too inaccessible; the lack of a clear message; and researchers' lack of familiarity with the policy process (Davies, 2012:49). In addition, evidence is not self-evident or definitive, in the sense that it does not tell users what they should do or how to act (Davies, 2012:42). It merely provides the basis upon which informed decision-making can be made. These limitations related to the concept of evidence makes the role of evaluation evidence in policy formulation uncertain or unguaranteed.

In the fourth place, the impact of research, evaluation and analysis is seldom direct or immediate because there is a time lag between gathering high quality evidence and realising it as policy and in practice (Davies, 2012:43). There is a mismatch between research and political timetables (Rutter, 2012:17). For instance, while policy may be decided in weeks or months, the gathering of data (evidence) may take many months and years (Davies, 2012:43). Therefore, the long time periods involved in empirical research can limit the potential impact of research on immediate policy problems (Marston & Watts, 2003:146; Rutter, 2012:10).

In addition, political representatives are under pressure to make a quick impact because of their short tenure (Rutter, 2012:17). This means that they need readily available

evidence, as they do not have the luxury of being able to wait for long-term research or evaluations that may provide information too late for them to take any action. Therefore, it is imperative that knowledge or evidence producers identify and provide the best available evidence in the time available to inform the contemporary policymaking process (Davies, 2012:43). In the government sector, planning is bound to financial years, electoral cycles and budget cycles. Any evidence produced for purposes of policymaking must coincide with these cycles; otherwise, it runs the risk of becoming irrelevant and not used.

2.6 Theories of Use of Evaluations

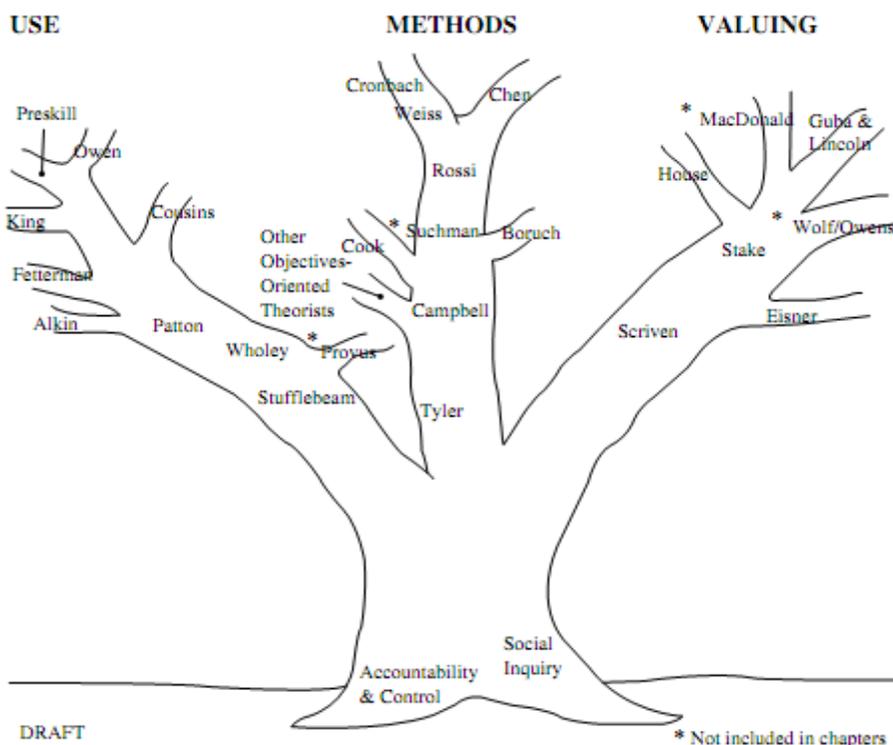
Concern about the use of evaluation led to the development of enabling frameworks and theories. As matter of qualification, it is important to note that while theory is defined as “that which would describe what would necessarily occur given particular sets of actions”, in the field of evaluation use, it is used somewhat synonymously with approaches or models (Carden & Alkin, 2012:103). Due to paucity of research about evaluation, no descriptive theory has been developed. Instead, some key researchers developed their own prescription of how an evaluation should be conducted. The fully developed prescriptions were referred to as “prescriptive theories” (Carden & Alkin, 2012:103). In most instances, evaluation theories postulate a set of rules, prescriptions and procedures of how an evaluation should be conducted, which makes them exclusively prescriptive (Christie & Alkin, 2008:132).

Accordingly, the more appropriate terms to use are approaches, models or even frameworks (Christie & Alkin, 2008:132). Therefore, reference to evaluation theory in this chapter is used with the understanding that it is not reference to theory, as defined by academic standards, but rather prescriptive theory. It is out of convention that the evaluation approaches are referred to as theories; and those who developed them are labelled theorists (Christie & Alkin, 2008:132).

To consider theories of evaluation use, great reliance has been placed on the Evaluation Theory Tree developed by Alkin and Christie (2004). Three branches consisting of use, methods and valuing are proposed on the evaluation theory tree illustrated in Figure 3.2

below (Alkin & Christie, 2004:13). The use branch focusses on the users and the way that the evaluation evidence is used; the methods branch deals with obtaining generalisability, or knowledge construction; and the valuing branch illuminates the critical evaluator role in valuing (Alkin & Christie, 2004:13).

Figure 2.2: Evaluation Theory Tree



Source: Alkin and Christie (2004:13)

The main focus of the study described in this dissertation was on the use branch, which is said to have begun its growth from the “decision-orientated theories” (Alkin & Christie, 2004:44). These theories are underpinned by the belief that evaluations should be designed to assist key programme stakeholders (commissioners of evaluation) in decision-making (Alkin & Christie, 2004:44). Similarly, utilisation theorists are primarily concerned with designing evaluations that intend to inform decision-making. While the use branch forms the basis of the discussion in this chapter, not all scholars on the branch are considered. The discussion focusses first on earlier and more developed models, and

then reflects on three of the models that were influenced by the initial models. In addition, the contribution of Patton to the use branch is not discussed because the ensuing chapter is dedicated exclusively to the examination of this.

It is also important to note that in the context of the 'Made in Africa Evaluation' discussed in section 2.2, Chilisa (2015: 326) developed "an African evaluation tree metaphor that shows African scholars' attempts at decolonizing, indigenizing, and envisioning new evaluation tools and practices". It has four branches which features approaches to evaluation in Africa by African theorists (Chilisa, 2015). In summary, the four branches entail:

- The least indigenized approach branch: dominated by focus on methods which has essentially entailed translation of evaluation instruments tools to local languages and use of evaluation results by commissioners of evaluation (Chilisa, 2015:32). This branch makes the minimal attempt at indigenization (Chilisa, 2015; Gaotlhobogwe *et al*, 2018:54).
- The adaptive evaluation branch which primarily focuses on integrative methods and use of evaluation results by evaluation commissioners. In this approach the Western evaluation models, theories and instruments are adapted, contextualized, and made culturally relevant and inclusive of local stakeholders (Chilisa *et al*, 2016). The African Peer Review Mechanism is presented as a good example of this approach (Chilisa *et al*, 2016:324).
- The relational evaluation branch whose focus is on integrative methods, use of evaluation results by both participants in the evaluation and commissioners of evaluation. This approach is based on African indigenous traditional cultures and values, and more specifically on the African philosophy commonly known as Ubuntu (Chilisa, 2015; Uwizeyimana, 2020:122).
- The development evaluation branch: It has a focus on integrating evaluation methodologies driven by African worldviews and paradigms with African paradigms on development (Chilisa, 2015:32).

While the African evaluation tree metaphor does not form the basis of the discussions that ensues below, it is imperative to acknowledge its existence and importance. Importantly, the tree points to emerging African indigenous evaluation approaches that are informed by postcolonial indigenous paradigms (Chilisa, 2015:318). Nonetheless, it is a subject worth pursuing beyond the confines and objectives of this study.

2.6.1 KEY USE THEORISTS

2.6.1.1 Context, Input, Process and Product (CIPP)

In the late 1960s, Stufflebeam developed the Context, Input, Process and Product (CIPP) model to address the limitations of the traditional evaluation methods of the time (Zhang, *et al.*, 2011:61). The key tenet of this model is the provision of timeous and systematic information for decision-making (Stufflebeam, 1971:02). This makes CIPP a use-(decision-making) orientated model. Primarily, CIPP is based on the premise that evaluation serves four kinds of decisions, namely planning, structuring, implementing, and recycling (Stufflebeam, 1971:5). In return, CIPP are the four types of evaluations that serve these types of decisions.

Therefore, the CIPP model entails four types of evaluations. Firstly, context evaluations “assess needs, problems, and opportunities within a defined environment” (Stufflebeam, 2003:31). In the second place, input evaluations “assess competing strategies and the work plans and budgets of approaches chosen for implementation” (Stufflebeam, 2003:31). Process evaluations monitor, document, and assess activities, while product evaluation identifies and assess short-term, long-term, intended, and unintended outcomes (Stufflebeam, 2003:32). The four parts (CIPP) of an evaluation respectively ask the following questions: What needs to be done? How should it be done? Is it being done? Did it succeed? (Stufflebeam, 2007:1).

The CIPP model emphasises that evaluations should serve key stakeholders, including commissioners of the evaluation, programme staff and beneficiaries (Stufflebeam, 2003:32). In addition, evaluators should conduct evaluations that help stakeholders to develop high quality, needed services and products, for example, and help identify and assess alternative improvement options (Stufflebeam, 2003:32). It is for this reason that

the CIPP Model is orientated to “administration, development, effective service, prevention of harm, accountability, dissemination, and research” (Stufflebeam, 2003:32). Essentially, the CIPP model entails evaluations that are purposefully aimed at responding to the needs of programme stakeholders and informing their decisions on the improvement or even termination of a programme. It is for this reason that it is deemed as a decision-orientated theory.

2.6.1.2 Discrepancy Evaluation

Another theorist on the use branch of the evaluation theory tree depicted in Figure 3.2 above is Malcolm Provus who developed the Discrepancy Evaluation Model (DEM). It is important to note that in the revised version of the evaluation theory tree, Provus’s model was deleted from the use branch because its influence on other perspectives on the branch had been minimal (Christie & Alkin, 2008:133). Nonetheless, in light of the study that is the focus of this dissertation, it is useful to reflect on this model because of the extent to which it deals with fostering use. Its importance lies not only in the influence it has on the other branches but also in what it postulates about use of evaluations.

The significance of this model is that it was developed in the government or public sector context and the public schooling system in particular (Provus, 1969). The idea was to develop an evaluation model that could obtain sufficient information about the performance of a programme to enable improvement at the early stages of planning and implementation. Moreover, the model was expected to enable state officials to make early predictions about the potential success or failure of programme and use this as the basis for terminating programmes with a high risk of failure (Provus, 1969:03). Therefore, the Provus’s DEM is orientated towards informing decision-making.

The model is based on five assumptions. Firstly, it is assumed that many educational programmes are implemented in public school systems without adequate planning (Provus, 1969:9). Secondly, evaluation must provide information, which decision-makers can use to improve, stabilise and assess programmes. In the third place, those responsible for making decisions to improve and stabilise a programme and those responsible for making decisions about the termination of a programme are the primary

and ultimate audience for evaluation information (Provus, 1969:9). Fourthly, staff involvement in the process of evaluation enhances commitment to programme improvement (use). Finally, evaluators must simultaneously maintain their independence and assume a non-directive role (Provus, 1969:9).

The DEM deems evaluation as a constant process, the purpose of which is to support programme staff and stakeholders (Alkin & Christie, 2004:46). It proposes four necessary developmental stages and one optional stage:

- a) Definition: aimed at clarifying goals, processes, and resources
- b) Installation: relates to revealing programme implementation discrepancies
- c) Process: the establishment of achievement of short-term outcomes or “enabling objectives”
- d) Product: the extent to which fundamental objectives of the programme are met
- e) Optional cost benefit analysis (Alkin & Christie, 2004:46).

Key to this theory is the emphasis on agreement on objectives and the standard of judging such objectives (Alkin & Christie, 2004:46).

2.6.1.3 Four Stage Procedure

Another important contributor to the use branch is Wholey’s four-stage procedure for obtaining evaluation information. His contribution was also developed in the government sector based on his participation in federal government programmes (Alkin & Christie, 2004:46). It is primarily focused on decision-makers in the form of managers and legislators (Alkin & Christie, 2004:46). Key to its development is the recognition that obtaining evaluation information is costly (Alkin & Christie, 2004:47). This means that evaluations must not only be used but also result in an improvement of an evaluated programme. Thus, importantly, Wholey proposed a way in which a determination can be made to undertake an evaluation or not. He answered the following question: Under what circumstances should an evaluation be undertaken?

In this respect, Wholey (2004:34) made four propositions that must be satisfied for a programme to be considered evaluable. These are well-defined programme goals and priority information needs; plausible programme goals; relevant performance data at a reasonable cost; and agreement by intended users of the evaluation on how the results will be used. When these propositions are met, the greater cost of irrelevant and inconclusive evaluations that contribute minimally to programme performance improvement will be averted (Wholey, 2004:34). Therefore, it is important that before a programme is evaluated, an assessment should be made to ascertain whether the evaluation is feasible. In making such a determination, all four propositions must be satisfied.

Against this background, the evaluability assessment is proposed as the first and main stage in an evaluation. It entails pre-assessment of the extent to which it is feasible to conduct an evaluation based on the four propositions that must be met for a programme to be evaluable (Alkin & Christie, 2004; Wholey, 2004). The key steps of the evaluability assessment are as follows:

- a) Involve intended users of evaluation information
- b) Clarify the intended programme from the perspective of policymakers
- c) Explore programme reality, including the plausibility and measurability of programme goals
- d) Explore alternative evaluation designs
- e) Agree on evaluation priorities and intended uses of information on programme performance (Wholey, 2004:36)

The other stages are rapid-feedback evaluation, which focuses primarily on extant and easily collected information; performance monitoring that measures programme performance; and intensive evaluation that uses comparison or control groups to estimate the effectiveness of programme activities in causing observed results better (Alkin &

Christie, 2004:47). In a re-examined evaluation theory tree, Wholey's approach placed a stronger emphasis on methods (Christie & Alkin, 2008:133).

2.6.1.4 Other Theorists

The other contributors to the use branch build up or enhances the models presented above. Below is a reflection on three of these models.

- (a) Cousins and Earl (1992:399) proposed the Participatory Evaluation Model (PEM), which they defined as “applied social research that involves a partnership between trained evaluation personnel and practice-based decision-makers, organisation members with programme responsibility, or people with a vital interest in the programme”. The key tenets are a focus on a small number of primary users, instead of large number of potentially interested members. These primary users are engaged in not only establishing evaluation questions but also substantial problem formulation; instrument design and selection; data collection; analysis; interpretation; recommendations; and reporting. Moreover, while the coordinator provides technical support, training and quality control, the study is a joint responsibility with the primary stakeholders (Cousins & Earl, 1992:400).

The Participatory Evaluation Model stresses that if there is genuine concern about utilisation, buy-in must be sought through the participation of programme personnel in the evaluation (Alkin & Christie, 2004:50). The theoretical orientation of the PEM is organisational learning, which is demonstrated by its emphasis on primary user participation during the entire evaluation process and transfer of technical skills (Cousins & Earl, 1992:401). At the heart of this approach is the proposition that “stakeholder participation in evaluation will enhance relevance, ownership, and thus utilization” (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998:6).

The PEM does not offer any radical perspective, compared to the earlier models. Instead, it builds on and offers a variation to Patton's UFE, which will be discussed in the ensuing chapter.

(b) Preskill focused on the use of evaluation to facilitate transformational learning, particularly in organisational contexts (Preskill & Torres, 2000:25). This approach was based on the constructivist learning theory, which intimates that “individuals and groups learn by interpreting, understanding, and making sense of their experiences, often within a social context” (Preskill & Torres, 2000:28). Therefore, in order for this learning to occur, the evaluation process must be collaborative, dialogic and reflective. It is expected that when members of an organisation are provided with an opportunity to learn through the process of an evaluation, they will be transformed by their experiences. This transformation will manifest in the organisation as well.

In order for evaluators to enable transformative learning, they must use a clinical approach, which means that they need to go beyond providing technical expertise to focusing on the current needs, context, history and the changing circumstances of a programme or organisation (Preskill & Torres, 2000:30). The second approach is to span the traditional boundaries between evaluator and programme staff. This approach entails the regular and intimate involvement of evaluators in the work of an organisation (Preskill & Torres, 2000:31). Thirdly, it is suggested that diagnosing which aspect of the organisational culture, leadership, systems and structures will enable an evaluator to adapt an approach will maximise the likelihood of learning (Preskill & Torres, 2000:33). This approach is referred to as diagnosing organisational capacity for learning.

Similarly, Preskill and Torres’s approach offers no radically different perspectives. In fact, it incorporates elements of both Patton’s UFE and Cousin’s PEM in proposing that evaluations must be tailored to fit the needs of primary users (UFE), and that the buy-in of personnel participating in the evaluation (PEM) must be sought. The transformational learning approach developed by Preskill and Torres (2000) has similarities to the process evaluation approach, in the sense that members of the organisation learn through the process of an evaluation. An important element is that they do not take it for granted that members of an organisation will learn just because an evaluation is taking place. Instead, they

propose an approach that will enable personnel to engage and reflect, thereby learning and transforming.

- c) King (1998) proposed a model that she labelled meliorative participatory evaluation (MPE). While it seeks to foster the use of evaluation, it is primarily focused on participatory use. This approach intimates that participatory evaluation (PE) efforts require a high level of interpersonal and organisational trust; participants must create shared meanings and experiences over time; and the power structure within which they are working must be addressed. In addition, over and above volunteers, MPE processes require leaders; MPE processes are best done slowly; and outside facilitators play an important role (King, 1998).

More specifically, King and Stevahn (2013) introduced interactive evaluation practice (IEP) as a guiding principle for conducting evaluation. IEP is defined as “the intentional act of engaging people in making decisions, taking action, and reflecting while conducting an evaluation study” (King & Stevahn, 2013). Key to IEP is the emphasis on the interpersonal factor, which refers to the unique ability of an evaluator to interact with people constructively throughout the planning and implementation of an evaluation study and to create activities and conditions conducive to positive interaction amongst evaluation participants (King & Stevahn, 2013:06). This approach is premised on the fact that evaluation practice requires interaction with people (clients, stakeholders, and programme staff) at one level or the other (King & Stevahn, 2013). Therefore, managing such an interaction is key to the success or failure of an evaluation and, more importantly, its potential use.

King’s (1998) work is also influenced by the PEM developed by Cousins and Earl and Patton’s UFE. Alkin and Christie (2004:53) provide two distinguishing features of King’s IEP model. The first is that King’s (1998) theory is more overtly use-orientated than that of Cousins’s and Earl. Secondly, King’s theory is more delineative than that of Patton in describing a procedure for fostering participation and obtaining use. It is worth adding that King’s (1998) theory comes close to that

of Patton in being pragmatic and in outlining practical steps or processes that need to be undertaken for use to be fostered.

2.6.1.5 Summary

While the theories of evaluation use were developed at different times, they feature more similarities than differences. There are few points to make in this respect:

- All the models, theories or approaches seek to foster use. Their principles do not contradict. In fact, their differences or similarities lie more in their principals' operational emphasis on how an evaluation should be undertaken to foster use. For instance, some models emphasise the participation of all stakeholders, while others refer specifically to primary stakeholders (those responsible for decision-making).
- The earlier (1960s) approaches were born in the social policy space, particularly in education. The CIPP model and the DEM were both developed and implemented first in the education field. Wholey's (2004) four-stage procedure, which was born because of participation in the federal government, is aimed primarily at managers and legislators.
- The theories of evaluation use all advocate participation and buy-in of stakeholders in the evaluation process as a means to enhance use. In fact, Cousins and Earl (1992) specifically introduced the PEM, while Preskill (2000) emphasised that learning occurs through participation. The notion of participation may be presented in different contexts and be emphasised to a lesser or greater degree, but at the heart of use is the common understanding that the process must be participatory.
- In addition to participation, the relevance of the evaluation and its information can enhance use. Hence, the models emphasised agreement between stakeholders and evaluators about the objectives and problems of an evaluation. However, in the end, relevant and useable data must be obtained.

- Evaluation must serve the stakeholders and respond to their needs by providing information that must inform decision-making. In fact, the CIPP model goes even further by proposing that the type of evaluation conducted must relate to the type of decision that needs to be taken.
- Wholey (2004) considered the costs of conducting evaluations and outlined conditions under which an evaluation should be undertaken. Thus, it was suggested that a programme is only evaluable if these four conditions are met. Key to these conditions is the agreement by intended users that the results of the evaluation will be used.

2.7 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, an overview of the notion of evaluation use was given, with a focus on its meaning, history, and theory. The use of evaluation is a multifaceted and complex notion. Its measurement is subject to many approaches and understandings. It is also affected by a plethora of factors that include individuals, organisational culture, systems, leadership, and so on. The study of evaluation use, which began in the 1960s and 1970s, has made tremendous progress (Cousins & Earl, 1992:397). Although, the meaning of evaluation use has moved from implying that evaluations only affect decision-making to a broader concept of evaluations leading to learning from the process, the literature on evaluation use still bemoan the limited use of evaluations. Thus, evaluation use remains an important and contested subject of study.

In this chapter, the consideration of the theories of evaluation use was not exhaustive as it was based on selected contributors. Nonetheless, it pointed to the fact that a number of prescriptive theories emphasise the importance of ensuring that evaluation findings are used. Despite this common acknowledgement of the importance of use in all the theories, as confirmed in the summary above, a gap still remains in the application of evaluation findings in evaluation practice. It remains important to explore how best to promote evaluation use. In fact, the literature calls for an integrated theory of evaluation use (Preskill & Torres, 2000:25). Patton's UFE model has developed in the last 30 years as a framework that potentially provides such an integrated approach. The next chapter will

focus on the efficacy of Patton's UFE as a possible integrated model that can be adopted to promote use specifically.

CHAPTER 3

UTILISATION-FOCUSED EVALUATION

3.1 Introduction

Despite general acceptance of the importance of using evaluations, a gap remains in the application of evaluation findings in evaluation practice. There is a strong case and a call for an integrated theory of evaluation use (Preskill & Torres, 2000:25). While some of the prescriptive theories to enhance the use of evaluations have been discussed in the previous chapter, Patton's UFE has been identified as a framework that potentially provides such an integrated approach. UFE has been selected primarily for the following reasons:

- (a) The use of evaluations is a topical issue
- (b) The approach has developed over a period spanning more than 50 years
- (c) It offers a detailed and practical approach to conducting evaluations with a focus on use
- (d) There is a strong advocacy for the approach in the literature.

It is for this reason that the research focused on the applicability of Patton's UFE as a possible integrated model that could be adopted to promote evaluation use specifically. This was linked to the following two objectives of the study:

- To investigate the potential value/relevance of the utilisation-focused evaluation model within the context of the South African agricultural sector
- To develop an adapted model that facilitates the use of evaluations in the South African agricultural sector.

The first section of this chapter provides a brief introduction to the founder of UFE, Michael Patton; outlines the key tenets and the 17 steps of the UFE approach. A critical analysis of the UFE approach is conducted in the second section of the chapter, with a focus on

(a) common evaluation limitations; (b) structural limitations; (c) UFE framework limitations; and (d) the applicability of UFE to the public sector. Based on this analysis, it will be concluded that UFE is the most practical approach to evaluations and could lead to evaluation uses. In order to overcome the identified limitations, an adapted UFE model for use in the South African agricultural sector is proposed in this chapter. Thus, the concluding section of this chapter provides the preliminary principles that, in fact, inform the adapted model, which is explained and presented later in this dissertation.

3.2 UFE Background

UFE is an approach founded and developed by Michael Patton¹. It is described as an “evaluation done for and with specific intended primary users for specific, intended uses” (Patton, 2004:37). The core principle of UFE is that the utility and actual use of an evaluation should be the basis of its judgement (Patton, 2004:37). Based on this principle, evaluators are required to “facilitate the evaluation process and design any evaluation with careful consideration of how everything that is done, from beginning to end, will affect use” (Patton, 2000:426). The primary emphasis of UFE is on “intended use by intended users” (Patton, 2000:426).

UFE focuses on the fundamental role of the user in ensuring that the evaluation is used. It is underpinned by the principle that “intended users are more likely to use evaluations if they understand and feel ownership of the evaluation process and findings” (Patton, 2004:38; Ramirez, Brodhead & Quarry, 2018). Therefore, the PIUs of the evaluation must be clearly identified and directly involved from the commencement of the evaluation process to ensure that the primary intended uses are identified. In this approach, the

¹ Michael Patton is the founding father of the UFE approach. He has had over 40 years’ experience as an evaluator, trainer and proponent of ways to make evaluations useful. He cut his teeth as an academic and researcher at the University of Minnesota, where he spent 18 years (1973-1991). His responsibilities included serving for five years as Director of the Minnesota Center for Social Research and ten years with the Minnesota Extension Service. During his elaborate career, Michael Patton wrote and published many books and articles on evaluation; received many awards for his contribution to the use of evaluations; and held strategic and influential positions in the evaluations field. Notably, he published the first edition of *Utilization-Focused Evaluation* in 1978. It was followed by the 2nd edition in 1986, the third edition in 1997 and the fourth edition in 2008. Other key publications included *Principles of Utilization-Focused Evaluation* (2018), *Facilitating Evaluation* (2018), *Developmental Evaluation* (2010) and *Blue Marble Evaluation* in 2019. In a period spanning over five decades, UFE developed to become one of the most influential evaluation approaches

responsibility of the evaluator is to ensure that the primary intended uses identified by the PIUs form the basis of all decisions related to the evaluation process. While the evaluator remains key to the evaluation, his/her primary task is to facilitate decision-making on the part of the PIUs.

UFE is highly personal and situational because it requires management of the relationship with PIUs (Patton, 2012:4). It does not promote any specific evaluation content, model, theory, or even use (Patton, 2012:5; Reed, 1999:152). Therefore, it may entail any evaluative purpose; type of data; any form of design; and any particular area of focus. In UFE, the issues are decided through a collaborative process with the identified PIUs concentrating on what they intend to use the evaluation for (Patton, 2012:6).

Key assumptions of this approach are as follows:

- (a) When PIUs understand and own the evaluation they are most likely to use it
- (b) Their active participation as PIUs in the evaluation process makes them more likely to understand and feel ownership
- (c) The evaluator is training PIUs in use when he intentionally engages them in the evaluation (Donaldson *et al.*, 2010:19; Ramirez *et al.*, 2018:263; Levine & Griñó, 2015).

These assumptions indicate the psychology of use that underpins UFE. The approach sets out specific steps that must be undertaken in order to ensure that an evaluation is used.

3.2.2.1. Steps to Foster Use

The UFE framework originally had five steps. While the 4th edition of Patton's *Utilization-Focused Evaluation* had 12 steps, in 2012 these steps were increased to 17 (Patton, 2012). Essentially, 3 steps in the 12 steps model are broken down to 3 and 2 steps. Firstly, Step 5 of the original 12-step model, which entailed the identification of PIUs, was broken into 2 steps. These were the identification of intended uses of findings (Step 5) and the

identification of intended uses of the evaluation process (Step 6) (Patton, 2013:87). In this delineation, the importance of process use of evaluation was underlined.

Secondly, Step 6 of the original 12 steps model was broken down into 3 steps, namely prioritising evaluation questions (Step 7); checking that fundamental issues of the evaluation are covered (Step 8); and determining the theory of change (Step 9). The emphasis in this expansion highlighted the theory of change. Thirdly, data analysis (Step 10) and facilitating use (Step 11) were reworked into three steps, namely data presented to PIUs (Step 14); the evaluation report (Step 15); and follow-up with PIUs (Step 16).

Thus, UFE proposes 17 steps or activities that must be followed in order to foster use by intended users. However, the “process is not neatly linear and sequential, and certainly not mechanical as there are interconnections among the steps” (Patton, 2012:13).

Table 3.1 below indicates the 17 steps.

Table 3.1: Utilisation-Focused Evaluation Steps

Utilisation-Focused Evaluation Checklist	
Step 1	Assess and build programme and organisational readiness for UFE
Step 2	Assess and enhance evaluator readiness/competence to undertake a UFE
Step 3	Identify, organise and engage PIUs
Step 4	Situational analysis conducted jointly with PIUs
Step 5	Identify and prioritise primary intended uses by determining priority purposes
Step 6	Consider and build in process uses if and as appropriate
Step 7	Focus priority evaluation questions
Step 8	Check that fundamental areas for evaluation inquiry are being adequately addressed
Step 9	Determine what intervention model or theory of change is being evaluated
Step 10	Negotiate appropriate methods to generate credible findings that support intended use by intended users

Step 11	Make sure intended users understand potential methods controversies and their implications
Step 12	Simulate use findings
Step 13	Gather data with ongoing attention on use
Step 14	Organise and present data for interpretation and use by PIUs
Step 15	Prepare an evaluation report to facilitate use and disseminate significant findings to expand influence
Step 16	Follow up with PIUs to facilitate and enhance use
Step 17	Metaevaluation of use: Be accountable, learn and improve

Source: Patton (2012)

Step 1: Assess Organisational Readiness for Evaluation

In the first step an assessment of the organization's readiness for evaluation is conducted (Patton, 2012). The extent of readiness of an organisation is a lynchpin, which influences all the other steps in the evaluation process (Ramirez, Brodhead & Quarry, 2018:260). Evaluation readiness refers to the ability of the organisation or the programme to undertake an evaluation successfully (Morariu, 2012:1). In UFE, this process involves an assessment of existing attitudes towards, and behaviours related to, evaluation use (Patton, 2012:16). Key considerations include how the purpose of an evaluation is decided, determining potential or appetite to learn and whether the organisational culture embraces change (Ramirez *et al.*, 2018:260; Morariu, 2012:1). While in many instances, the purpose of the evaluation is dictated by the funder or commissioners, UFE advocates using the assessment of readiness phase to shift to a more inclusive and negotiated approach (Patton, 2012).

Several instruments have been developed over the years to guide the assessment of organisational readiness for an evaluation. The UFE checklist developed by Patton (2012; 2013) provides detailed themes or questions that must be explored under each step:

- Assess the commitment of the commissioners and funders to use the evaluation

- Assess the evaluation context by examining key programme documents, talk to key stakeholders, reflect on their past evaluation use and determine existing perceptions about the evaluation
- Before starting the evaluation, engage PIUs in a workshop aimed at assessing and developing readiness for evaluation
- Introduce the standards for evaluation as the framework within which the evaluation will be conducted

Ramirez *et al.* (2018) also propose three prompts for the readiness of an organisation for an evaluation, which are (1) the power to design the evaluation, (2) commitment to learning, and (3) building an evaluation culture. The power to design evaluation is characterised by the trade-off between an evaluation that is imposed by the donor or funder focusing primarily on accountability and evaluations based on meaningful participation of the grantee in designing the evaluation and key questions (Ramirez *et al.*, 2018). While there are very few funders who are willing to change power relations by making grantees evaluation partners, the focus of UFE is to encourage the funder to relinquish or share the power to design evaluation (Ramirez *et al.*, 2018:261).

The second prompt is willingness to learn. The participation of key PIUs in shaping the evaluation provides them with an opportunity to learn (Ramirez *et al.*, 2018:263). Therefore, an organisation that is willing and able to have a participatory approach to designing the evaluation would be committed and would learn from the evaluation process. Another means to enhance organisational learning is producing meta-evaluations (Ramirez *et al.*, 2018: 264). Building an evaluation culture is the third element of readiness (Ramirez *et al.*, 2018:263). Basically, the collaborative process experienced through UFE leaves an imprint of a way of thinking on the organisation (culture of evaluation) (Ramirez *et al.*, 2018:265).

When the assessment finds that the organisation is ready, the evaluator proceeds to formal stakeholder engagement. However, there is a curious and legitimate question of

what happens if the assessment concludes that an organisation is not ready for an evaluation. After all, evaluations do not have to be conducted at all costs. In this respect, at least three options may be explored. Firstly, internal evaluators may seek to create the conditions for readiness. Secondly, where some of the main factors are favourable, professional evaluators may find ways and means to create readiness (Ramirez *et al.*, 2018:265; Dahler-Larsen, 2012:34).

Thirdly, an evaluator may also decide not to proceed with the evaluation, especially if he/she thinks the lack of readiness cannot be remedied. The decision to turn down an evaluation may be based on the following professional reasons:

- (a) The desired work is not plausible or at an acceptable level of quality
- (b) The logic of the programme is not clear
- (c) There are insufficient resources (budget, time, expertise) to carry out the evaluation
- (d) Data are unavailable (Smith, 1998:179; Dahler-Larsen, 2012:35).

What is most important for UFE is whether there are opportunities to improve the identified programme (use the evaluation). In other words, the question is whether the intended users of the evaluation are not able or willing to use the evaluation results (Dahler-Larsen, 2012:35). If the answer is negative, then it does not make sense to carry out the evaluation.

There are similarities between Step 1 (assessing organisational readiness) and Step 4 (situational analysis) in the intention and type of questions asked. Both steps are related, and they address similar issues to those of a phenomenon known as “evaluability assessment” (EA). EA is essentially “a process which leads to a decision about whether it is sensible to evaluate under given circumstances” (Dahler-Larsen, 2012:34). The similarities between EA and Step 1 as well as Step 4 are ventilated in Step 4.

Step 2: Assess Evaluator’s Competency

In the second step of UFE, the competency of an evaluator is assessed. Evaluator competencies broadly relate to the skills, abilities, essential knowledge, experience

and/or qualifications that an evaluator needs to conduct programme evaluations effectively (Better Evaluation, 2020; Ghere, King, Stevahn & Minnema, 2006). While there is no universal consensus on evaluator competencies, there have been various suggestions regarding the minimum competencies that an evaluator must possess (Lee, 2012:439; King, Stevahn, Ghere & Minnema, 2001:230). In 1994, Stufflebeam developed formal standards that outline key attributes for improved programme evaluation for the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation. Although these standards are widely recognised up to this day, they are biased towards an effective evaluation, rather a competent evaluator (Stevahn, King, Ghere & Minnema, 2005:45). Similarly, the American Evaluation Association (AEA) (1995) drafted the Guiding Principles for Evaluators, which not only outlined the guidelines for evaluation practice but also further developed the field as a profession.

King *et al.* (2001) developed the Essential Evaluator Competencies, which is a comprehensive set of proposed evaluator competencies that an evaluator must possess. In 2005, these were extended and refined into the Essential Competencies for Program Evaluators (ECPE) (Stevahn *et al.* 2005). The importance of the ECPE is that they encompass several sources of competencies, including the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation and the AEA's Guiding Principles for Evaluators (Lee, Altschuld & Lee, 2012:440). Similarly, McGuire and Zorzi (2005) developed a core body of knowledge for evaluator professional development for the Canadian Society of Evaluations. In 2009, the Canadian Evaluation Society adopted the Professional Designations Program to "define, recognise and promote the practice of ethical, high quality and competent evaluation in Canada" (Patton, 2012:39). While this is a voluntary professional credential recognising competencies, the accreditation means that the holder has provided evidence of the education and experience required to be a competent evaluator (Gauthier, S., Cavalcanti, R., Goguen, J. & Sibbald, M., 2015:90; Patton, 2012:39).

Despite these developments and growing literature, there is still no consensus on competencies for evaluators (Cousins, 2005; Ghere *et al.*, 2006:109). Central to the lack of consensus is the dichotomy between an evaluator as a programme advocate whose

main task is to assist programmes (Fetterman, 2001) and an independent assessor who promotes and values the importance of objectivity (Scriven, 1997; Lee *et al*, 2012; Huse & McDavid, 2006:02). Without belabouring the issue, it is noteworthy that despite the evolution of the field of evaluation over the years, there is no universally agreed set of competencies for those labelling themselves as an evaluator.

Nonetheless, there are some important competencies that an evaluator following the UFE approach ought to possess. In addition to the generic skills required to conduct credible evaluation, UFE accentuates increased attention to interpersonal and group facilitation skills because of a need to focus more on direct engagement with PIUs (Patton, 2012:42). An evaluator following the UFE approach should have skills in group facilitation, negotiation, conflict resolution, group problem solving and decision-making dynamics (Patton, 2012:45). Evaluator credibility is very important to the overall credibility of the findings of an evaluation.

While the methods and measures themselves need to be credible so that the resulting data are also credible, their credibility is derived from their appropriate and competent application by the evaluator (Patton, 2012:40). Therefore, there must be a balance between technical knowledge and the competence to work effectively with diverse stakeholders (Patton, 201; Bryson, Patton & Bowman, 2011:2). The emphasis is that the evaluators should possess the education, abilities, skills, and experience appropriate to undertake tasks proposed in the evaluation.

The process of assessing evaluator competency is undertaken by the commissioning organisation. It entails an assessment of the evaluator's essential competencies; matching evaluator commitment with possible challenges; the match between the substantive knowledge of the evaluator and the will needed; and ensuring that evaluators accept that effectiveness should be judged based on the use of the evaluation by PIUs (Patton, 2012:408). This step assumes that the commissioning organisation is familiar with and committed to the UFE approach. However, this is more often than not the case; hence, the first step seeks to determine organisational readiness for UFE.

In fact, the UFE approach places responsibility on the evaluator to carry out evaluations that will be used by PIUs. In this step, the organisation assumes responsibility. However, the understandable dilemma here is that evaluators cannot objectively judge their own competency. The implication is that if the organisation fails to secure an evaluator who is competent in applying the UFE approach, the evaluation risks failure, which would also be the case if the organisation is not ready for UFE. Both these steps are a foundation for UFE. If the foundation is not solid, the house will collapse.

Step 3: Primary Intended Users

Stakeholders are “individuals, groups, or organisations that can affect or are affected by an evaluation process and/or its findings” are key to any useful evaluation (Bryson *et al*, 2011:1). This indicates a wide variety of people and groups with different interests and objectives. It is useful to consider them in a cluster of four groups as proposed by Green (2005: 397):

- (a) People with decision-making authority over the programme (including other policymakers, funders and advisory boards)
- (b) Those directly responsible for the implementation of the programme, including programme developers, administrators in the organisation, programme managers, and direct service staff
- (c) The intended beneficiaries of the programme, their families and their communities
- (d) People disadvantaged by the programme, for instance, those who have lost funding opportunities

In addition, an array of people or organisations (stakeholders) has a direct or indirect interest in programme effectiveness, such as the media, civil society, interest groups and members of the public (Weiss, 1998:28). In the context of the current study, stakeholders included government representatives (both executive and legislative); officials in the departments of agriculture (national and provincial); farmers and farmers’

organisations/associations, farm workers and dwellers; rural communities; and the public at large.

Despite the wide spectrum of stakeholders involved in any programme, UFE focuses on the PIUs of an evaluation because although all stakeholders have a vested interest in an evaluation, PIUs play a principal role in decision-making and, in turn, are in a position to utilise results (Christie & Alkin, 2003:376). Therefore, the task of the utilisation-focused evaluator is to narrow the potential list of stakeholders to a much shorter, more specific group of PIUs (Bryson *et al.*, 2011:02). This means that the group of PIUs is a small subset of the larger stakeholder group (Christie & Alkin, 2003:375). Essentially, these are the specific stakeholders identified to work with the evaluator throughout the evaluation “to focus the evaluation, participate in making design and methods decisions, and interpret results to assure that the evaluation is useful, meaningful, relevant, and credible” (Patton, 2012:67). Although the group of PIUs is supposed to be a small group, “large network projects may require multi-level representation from different types of individuals who provide senior guidance, approval of results, and other management decisions” (Ramirez & Broadhead, 2013:29).

The importance of stakeholder participation and its potential to ensure that the evaluation is used is widely recognised in the literature and by evaluators (Franke, Christie & Parra, 2003:14; Bryson *et al.*, 2011:2; Shula & Cousins, 1997). In fact, UFE presupposes that no evaluation should commence, unless and until there is certainty that the PIUs will use the information that will be generated (Ramirez & Brodhead, 2014). In at least two surveys, members of the AEA rated identifying and prioritising the PIUs of an evaluation as extremely or very important (Preskill & Caracelli, 1997; Fleischer, 2007).

In UFE, the PIU is key to the use of an evaluation because he/she brings to the fore the important element known as “the personal factor”. This refers to the “presence of an identifiable individual or group of people who personally care about the evaluation and the findings it generates” (Patton, 2012:62). It is argued that where there is the personal factor, evaluations are used and in its absence, there is a clear lack of evaluation impact. The personal factor represents “the leadership, interest, enthusiasm, determination, commitment, assertiveness, and caring of specific individual people” (Patton, 2012:62).

Without doubt, these individuals (PIUs) are central to the evaluation process and its use. In the context of the public sector, the PIUs of evaluations are the policymakers (politicians); public sector managers; beneficiaries and users of public services; academic and research organisations; and the media (Jitsing, 2013).

In order to derive an effective set of PIUs, it is important to have a transparent, inclusive, multi-level and participatory stakeholder analysis and identification process (Ramirez & Brodhead, 2013: 28). Without any in-depth exploration, it suffices to note that a variety of stakeholder analysis techniques can be used to aid the identification of PIUs. The starting point for the utilisation-focused evaluator is the checklist that provides key issues to consider, including the traits or characteristics of a PIU (Patton, 2013). Furthermore, Bryson *et al.* (2011) outline twelve stakeholder identification and analysis techniques based on the steps of the evaluation process.

In general, these techniques are aimed at identifying people who are interested, knowledgeable and connected to an important stakeholder constituency. Moreover, they should be credible; teachable; committed to and available for interaction throughout the evaluation process; decision-makers or influential individuals; representative of diverse perspectives and/or experiences; and experts in the area being studied (Patton, 2012; Bryson *et al.*, 2012:04; Ramirez & Brodhead, 2013:77; Preskill & Jones, 2009). The fundamental principles for the selection of these PIUs are representation, accountability, quality, credibility, legitimacy and the ability to act (Bryson *et al.*, 2012:04).

Step 4 Situational Analysis with PIUs

In this step, there is a focused, intentional, systematic and situational analysis undertaken with PIUs (Patton, 2012:88). It is an analysis of situational factors or the evaluation environment aimed at understanding the programme and organisation; the history and experience of previous evaluations; possible barriers or resistance to process and use; and the resources available for UFE (Patton, 2012:88; Ramirez & Brodhead, 2013:32; Miller, 2016:5). In addition, because of the interrelatedness of the stages, the analysis may also review primary stakeholders to determine their representativeness of the interested parties and identify the decision and action context, in the sense of what

decision the evaluation aims to inform (Patton, 2012:89; Ramirez & Brodhead, 2013:32). The main challenge is to identify factors and forces that will support and enhance evaluation use versus those factors and forces that may constitute barriers and become sources of resistance to use” (Patton, 2012:90).

Steps 1 and 4 are similar to the notion “evaluability assessment”, which is a diagnostic and prescriptive tool to help evaluators determine the appropriateness of an evaluation in a given situation (Dahler-Larsen, 2012:29). The first version of this assessment was focused primarily on whether it is sensible to evaluate under given circumstances and in light of expected improvements (Wholey, 1987; 2004; Shadish, Cook & Leviton, 1991:237). Moreover, this assessment was focused primarily on the programme, its description, programme theory, the availability of data, and so on (Dahler-Larsen, 2012). However, the scope of its analysis of organisational readiness, PIUs and potential use of the evaluation was limited. In this format, the evaluability assessment differed from situational analysis as proposed by UFE in scope and purpose.

However, the new version of evaluability assessment, which is dubbed 2.0, broadens the scope to an extent that it covers most of the issues that UFE situational analysis seeks to address. Broadly, this version includes elements, such as programme description; the characteristics of the evaluation system; the likely use and consequence of the evaluation system; and democratic aspects (Dahler-Larsen, 2012). While the content is the same as the first version, the purpose is different in that it determines whether it is rational to undertake an evaluation. In contrast, situational analysis seeks to understand the context of the evaluation, key players and influences better. It is conducted long after the decision has been taken to undertake an evaluation. Use is just but one aspect of evaluability assessment, but it is the sole focus of the UFE of readiness. Furthermore, evaluability assessment comes across as a technical exercise undertaken by an evaluator, while situational analysis is an exercise undertaken together with PIUs.

Some of the questions involved in situational analysis are already explored in the previous three steps. For example, Step 1 (assess organisational readiness) takes into account the availability of resources (time and people), the context (situation) of the programme

and the organisation. Step 2 (assess evaluator competency) explores the question of whether the evaluator or the team has the necessary competencies to undertake a UFE. In Step 3 (PIUs), the key question of PIUs is addressed. However, central to UFE is that situational analysis is ongoing, as the evaluator is expected to adapt to an ever-changing environment (Patton, 2012:87).

Step 5: Identify and Prioritise Primary Intended Users

It is always important to remember that while UFE is presented as a series of steps, it can also be understood as a complex adaptive system (Patton, 2012:138). The issues explored in some steps are already been dealt with or even partly addressed in previous steps. In Step 5, the evaluator works with PIUs to determine the primary purpose of an evaluation. The evaluator's task is to present and explain primary purpose options and their implication for use, while the PIUs determine which purposes are primary (Patton, 2012:114). However, when organisational readiness is assessed in Step 1, the purpose of the evaluation would be explored too in asking the question, is the organisation ready for this kind of evaluation? Similarly, Step 2 (assess evaluator competency) relates to the kind of evaluation to be undertaken.

Nonetheless, it is still imperative to consider the issue of purpose of use separately and in more detail. There are critical questions to be asked about the evaluation's purpose in isolation because other uses may emerge during later steps of the evaluation (Ramirez & Brodhead, 2012:39). In addition, this step is critical because it provides an opportunity for PIUs to shape the purpose of the evaluation, thereby deriving a sense of ownership of the process (Ramirez & Brodhead, 2013:39). The evaluator facilitates and works with PIUs in identifying a menu of interests and purposes to guide their exploration of potential uses and consequent prioritisation of the evaluation's purpose (Ramirez & Brodhead, 2013:39); (Patton, 2013:06). Therefore, in a collaborative process, the evaluator and PIUs determine the purpose of the evaluation.

This stage is perhaps where UFE interrelates with empowerment evaluation (EE), as advocated by Fetterman (1994). EE "is the use of evaluation concepts and techniques to foster self-determination" (Fetterman, 1994:1). Self-determination refers to people's

ability to define their course of life based on several interconnected capabilities that follow each other logically (Fetterman, 1994:02). These capabilities are as follows:

- Needs identification and articulation
- Identification of goals or expectations and developing a plan to achieve them;
- Resource identification;
- Making rational choices from various alternative courses of action
- Taking appropriate steps to pursue objectives
- Evaluating short- and long-term results

EE has been likened to other inclusive evaluation approaches, such as stakeholder-based, participatory evaluation and UFE (Patton, 2005:409; Schnoes, Murphy-Berman & Chambers, 2000: 54). The similarities lie in the emphasis placed by EE on issues, such as ownership, relevance, understandability, access and involvement. This has led Patton (1997) to question whether there is any difference between empowerment evaluation and other collaborative forms of evaluation such as UFE (Schnoes *et al.*, 2000: 55). A counter argument is that other collaborative evaluation approaches make stakeholder self-determination a more specific focus of the evaluation effort (Schnoes *et al.*, 2000:55).

To illustrate this point, while a utilisation-focused evaluator works in partnership with PIUs to ensure that the evaluation is conducted in a way that will enhance use, an EE-orientated evaluator seeks to empower the stakeholders to control the evaluation (Fetterman, 1994:3). While a utilisation-focused evaluator stays the course until the evaluation is concluded and even makes follow-ups to ensure that an evaluation is used, an EE-orientated evaluator will “gradually disengage from the project’s evaluation component as the stakeholders become more competent in and committed to the ongoing program evaluation” (Schnoes *et al.*, 2000: 56). For purposes of the current research, it suffices to note that there are important similarities between the UFE and EE approaches.

Be that as it may, there still a concern about whether the utilisation-focused evaluator arrives at the right time to assist with the determination of the evaluation purpose. As mentioned in Step 4, very often, the internal evaluation team determines the terms of reference (ToR) (including the evaluation purpose) before inviting interested evaluators to bid. The appointed evaluator has to deliver on what is stipulated in the contract, including the purpose. In some instances, the commissioning entity leaves room for the evaluator to determine the methodology but not the purpose. Therefore, in this context, the evaluator may identify other purposes; however, the difficulty is prioritising them because the one determined by the entity before commissioning must guide the process.

Step 6: Consider and Build on Process Uses

Key to UFE philosophy is that participation in an evaluation (process) provides an opportunity for PIUs to learn and influences their thinking and behaviour (Ramirez *et al.*, 2018:263; Herbert, 2014:392; Henry & Mark, 2003). The change in individual thinking and behavior, as well as programme or organisational procedures and culture as a result of learning that occurs during the evaluation, is defined as process use (Patton, 1997:90). In Step 6, an evaluator, in collaboration with PIUs, considers ways in which being engaged in the process of evaluation can be useful, apart from the findings that might emerge from the process (Patton, 2012:140). The importance of process use has been widely highlighted in the literature. In fact, the defining theme of Patton's (1997) *Utilization-Focused Evaluation* 3rd edition is the introduction and examination of process use.

An important exercise in this step is to review alternative process uses with PIUs (Patton, 2013:7). In this respect, Patton (2012:145) identifies six primary uses of the evaluation process: (a) infusing evaluative thinking into an organisation's culture; (b) enhancing shared understandings; (c) supporting and reinforcing the programme through intervention-orientated evaluation; (d) instrumentation effects (what gets measured gets done); (e) increasing participant's engagement, sense of ownership and self-determination; and (f) programme or organisational development. The other tasks are to review the potential positive and negative effects of making process use a priority in the

evaluation; and examine the relationship and interconnections between potential process uses and the use of findings (Patton, 2013:7). It may also be that that in Step 5, some of the uses have been already explored and prioritised.

However, in this dissertation, it will be shown that in the practice of evaluation in the South African public sector, there is no stage when a reflection like this is made. While there are instances when people do learn from an evaluation, it is not a result of a purposeful reflection on the part of PIUs and an evaluator.

Step 7: Focus on Priority Evaluation Questions

Key evaluation questions are fundamental to the evaluation because they serve as a road map. They are useful in determining evaluation parameters in line with the information needs of PIUs, data collection limitations and advantages, as well as the available resources, (Wingate, 2015; Preskill & Jones, 2009:6). However, an evaluation cannot respond to each and every identified questions. It is recognised that due to time, resource, and practical constraints only a subset of questions and components of a program theory can be evaluated (Donaldson, 2007:43). Therefore, Identifying and prioritizing the most important evaluation questions is of paramount importance (Donaldson, 2007: 43). While in other approaches resources, time or another theme is an important consideration, for UFE utility is the determining factor.

Accordingly, in Step 7, the evaluation questions are prioritised to focus on utility. The evaluator works with PIUs to identify questions that will produce both answers and action, by making sure that the questions are relevant, answerable and actionable (Patton, 2012:170). Therefore, the PIUs move from uses, as discussed in Step 5 to a carefully formulated set of evaluation questions termed “key evaluation questions” (KEQs) (Ramirez & Broadhead, 2013:45). While the evaluation questions may have been identified in previous steps, such as Steps 1 and 5, it must be recognised that in the later stages of the process, PIUs may identify additional evaluation questions that they will want to include (Ramirez & Broadhead, 2013:45). Therefore, this step is essentially about reviewing and confirming evaluation questions always with use in mind. This process will continue throughout the subsequent steps.

The role and participation of PIUs in developing, refining and focusing the evaluation questions cannot be overemphasised. After all, central to enhancing use is “to develop a set of evaluation questions that reflect the perspectives, experiences and insights of as many relevant individuals, groups, organisations and communities as possible” (Preskill & Jones, 2009:6). Since the PIUs are potential users of the evaluation, their input is essential to establishing the focus and direction of the evaluation. In addition, good evaluation questions that encompass a wide range of perspectives are more likely to yield findings that are useful, relevant and credible, and thereby enhancing use (Preskill & Jones, 2009:9). Similarly, through their participation in exploring various questions and narrowing them down to KEQs, PIUs do not only feel a sense of ownership of the process but also gain valuable lessons about the programme and its evaluation.

Various strategies (processes) and criteria can be applied to determine KEQs. For instance, Ramirez and Brodhead (2013:45) propose that the starting point should be for PIUs to define evaluation areas or themes closely related to the identified intended uses (Ramirez & Brodhead, 2013:45). This is followed by the development of more specific questions within each of the themes. In order to narrow the evaluation questions, Ramirez and Brodhead (2013:47) propose that PIUs be provided with a short list of KEQ categories (inputs, outcomes, impacts, approach/models and process or quality issues) on which questions can be focused. As evaluation questions are decided, the evaluator and the PIUs should always ensure that the KEQs are linked to the uses that were identified in Step 5 or any other stage (Ramirez & Brodhead, 2013:52).

KEQs can also be identified or refined by applying the criteria for good UFE evaluation questions (Patton, 2013:8). The criteria are based on affirmative answers to the following questions:

- a) Can the questions be answered adequately to inform understanding and support action?
- b) Can the questions be addressed in a reasonable period of time and at a reasonable cost?

- c) Are the available data able to answer the questions? (They are not philosophical, religious, or moral questions)
- d) Is the answer unbiased or not predetermined by the phrasing of the question?
- e) Have the PIUs identified and justified the question's importance in providing the answer they require?
- f) Is the answer actionable? (PIUs can express that they would use the answer for future decision-making and action).

A number of organisations have developed checklists or tools to help develop good evaluation questions. For instance, the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) published *Good Evaluation Questions: Checklist to Help Focus Your Evaluation*. This document focusses on various criteria, namely stakeholder engagement in the development of questions; appropriateness and fit by linkages with the programme theory; relevance to the purpose of the evaluation; feasibility; and in summary, the questions that will provide a complete picture of the programme (CDC, 2020). Based on a literature review and experience with evaluations, Wingate (2015) designed a similar checklist, which identifies the characteristics of good evaluation questions. It is also based on five criteria, with the only difference being the requirement for questions to be evaluative and specific (Wingate, 2015).

The challenge with this step is that usually KEQs are agreed on at the beginning of the evaluation, or they are already prescribed by an evaluation system or a previously developed evaluation framework (Better Evaluation, 2020; Independent Evaluation Group, 2015; SIDA; 2018:18). In the case of the NEPF, the evaluation team develops the KEQs before engaging interested evaluators (DPME, 2011). The budget and approval for the evaluation is provided based on the stipulated purpose and KEQs. Therefore, while the UFE approach recognises this, it remains a practical challenge because when evaluations questions are set even before commissioning an evaluator, there is little change that can be made. Potentially, questions can be added, but changing the key evaluation questions is tantamount to changing the direction, perhaps even the purpose,

of the evaluation. Therefore, the challenge for the utilisation-focused evaluator is to work with PIUs to navigate, or ensure a balance between predetermined evaluation questions and those that emerge in the later stages of the evaluation.

There is a strong correlation between the purpose of an evaluation and the KEQs. The purpose of an evaluation is central. Questions, methods and timing all flow from a clear understanding of how the findings will be used (Twersky & Lindblom, 2012:11). In fact, the form that the evaluation questions should take is shaped by the functions they must perform because their principal role is to focus the evaluation on areas that have been identified as key by PIUs (Rossi *et al.*, 2004:69). Therefore, when the purpose of the evaluation is predetermined, such as that prescribed by the Independent Evaluation Group (2015) and Sida (2018), there is limited scope for changing the questions. In some instances, changing the KEQs may require changing the purpose of the evaluation. This may result in a different evaluation altogether, as in the case described by Ramirez and Broadhead (2013:82), where a separate study had to be commissioned because in one of the steps, the context changed, which required an evaluation of the outcomes of one of the new initiatives.

Step 8: Fundamentals of Evaluation

This step entails checking that fundamental areas for evaluation inquiry are being adequately addressed. Patton (2012) identifies the three fundamental areas as implementation evaluation (implementation/process question); outcomes evaluation (outcomes question); and the connection between implementation and outcomes evaluation (attribution question). Therefore, in essence, the three classic evaluation questions to be considered are as follows:

a) The implementation or process question

This question is what happened in the programme? This is about establishing the key tenants of a programme; whether it is implemented consistent to its design; how well the programme is working and whether the programme is accessible and acceptable to its target population (CDC, 2020). The evaluation of the results of a programme

(outcome) must be preceded by an assessment of its implementation. This helps to distinguish between theory failure (idea did not work) and implementation failure (failure to implement the idea) (Patton, 2012:194).

b) *The outcomes question*

This question is what resulted? Classically, the main question is to what extent is the programme attaining its goals; or, to what degree is the programme having an effect on the target population's behaviour (Patton, 2012:204; CDC, 2020)? This entails measuring three main points of comparison: the baseline (starting point); the goal or target (the ideal or hoped result); and the ending point (actual results) (Patton, 2012: 204).

c) *The attribution or impact question*

This question is what resulted from (and be attributed to) what was implemented? This is about causality. It is a determination of whether the observed attributing outcomes can be confidently attributed to the intervention (Patton, 2012:225).

While Patton (2012:193) presents the three classical questions as the mainstays, the literature on evaluation identifies many other important fundamental questions. In the section on the focusing of evaluation questions, a whole menu or variety of these questions, which are referred to as basic and creative options, are tabulated. Understandably, these have to be narrowed and focused within the context of traditional evaluation fundamentals (Patton, 2012:192). However, there are three other key fundamentals in the literature that warrant addition because they deal with the fundamentals of traditional evaluation that are sufficiently covered in Patton's (2012) three classical questions. The following three evaluation types are therefore added:

- a) Formative evaluation, evaluability assessment and needs assessment that address the social conditions a programme is intended to ameliorate; the need for a programme; and the extent to which an evaluation is possible, based on goals and objectives (CDC, 2020; Rossi *et al.*, 2004:54) – this is also referred to as diagnostics evaluation (DPME, 2011:08)

- b) Assessment of programme theory that raises questions about programme conceptualisation and design – this is also referred to as design evaluation (Rossi *et al.*, 2004:54; (DPME, 2012:8)
- c) Efficiency or economic assessment that raises questions about programme cost and cost-effectiveness – the question is what resources are being used in a programme? In addition, what are their costs (direct and indirect) in relation to the outcomes (Rossi *et al.*, 2004:54; CDC, 2020)?

The questions relate to the type of evaluation being conducted. The types of evaluation questions and methods for answering them are so different that each constitutes a form of evaluation in its own right (Rossi *et al.*, 2004:80). However, some methods are inappropriate for particular evaluation questions (Chelimsky, 2012:78). For instance, an implementation evaluation will not be able to answer a question about causality (impact). It is for this reason that the process of focusing evaluation questions (Step 7) is closely related to or goes together with checking that fundamentals are being addressed (Patton, 2012:192).

In this step, the evaluator works with PIUs to ascertain whether questions have been formulated and prioritised according to the agreed fundamentals (Patton, 2013). Assuming that there are only three fundamentals, the exercise will check which implementation evaluation questions should have priority; determine which outcomes evaluation questions will yield the most useful findings; and determine the importance and relative priority of the attribution questions (Patton, 2013:9). Similarly, if the evaluation is operating according to different fundamentals, the same exercise will be undertaken.

Step 9: Theory of Change

In this step, the task is to determine the intervention model or theory of change that is being evaluated (Patton, 2012:231). It is meant to clarify the intervention model by questioning the assumptions and articulating testable theories of change, in an attempt to increase the utility of the evaluation for the PIUs (Patton, 2012:232). The theory of change can be located in the realm of theory-based evaluation (TBE). The importance of

this approach in formulating evaluation questions and interpreting findings is widely discussed and occasionally practised by evaluators (Rossi *et al.*, 2004:93; Birkmayer & Weiss, 2000; Weiss, 1998). Wholey's work on evaluability assessment stressed the need to find out whether the implicit theory underlying a programme made sense prior to the start of a formal study (Wholey 1987).

Programme theory, (such as the theory of change), is defined "as the set of assumptions about the relationships between the strategy and tactics the programme has adopted and the social benefits it is expected to produce" (Rossi *et al.*, 2004:93). It is aimed at constructing plausible and defensible models (underlying assumptions) of how programmes can be expected to work (Chen & Rossi, 1997:285; Weiss, 1998). At the core of TBE is the notion of examining and explaining the assumption(s)/theory/theories on which a programme is based and then using them to guide the evaluation (Birkmayer & Weiss, 2000; Wildschut, 2014:44). Key to the popularity of a theory-based evaluation (TBE) is its potential to achieve validity of evaluation when random assignment is not possible. This is based on the assertion that if the evaluation can show the series of micro steps that lead from inputs to outcomes, then usually causal attribution is within reach (Weiss, 1998:43).

The centrality of TBE in Step 9 is because determining a theory of change or the underlying theory of a programme will also help identify the questions that need to be answered by an evaluation. TBE does this by constructing a conceptual model of (a) how the programme is expected to work; (b) the presumed connections between its various activities and functions; and (c) the intended social benefit (Rossi *et al.*, 2004:93). This entails probing the rationale and appropriateness of programme assumptions as well as determining whether they have been implemented in an effective manner (Rossi *et al.*, 2004:93). In addition, the TBE approach highlights the elements of programme activity that deserve attention in the evaluation (Birkmayer & Weiss, 2000:410), which is important in identifying or reviewing the key questions that are also identified in the previous steps.

The main step is to question with substantial detail the assumptions on which a programme is based, including its activities and their expected effects; planned future actions; the reception of the programme; and expected outcomes (Patton, 2012:232; Birkmayer & Weiss, 2000:408). The theory of a programme can be presented or examined by using various tools, such as a logic model, a programme model, an outcome line, a cause map and action theory, for example. Widely used, the logic model entails depicting an intervention's inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts in a sequential series. Thus, a means-ends hierarchy builds a chain of objectives by trichotomising objectives into immediate, intermediate and ultimate outcomes (Patton, 2012).

However, the challenge is that at times, the theories of change are not well articulated in programmes, particularly those in the public sector (Rabie & Goldman, 2014:12). A lack of clear programme theory, unclear or illogical linkages between programme activities and outcomes and inexplicit goals have been proposed as good reasons for turning down an evaluation (Smith, 1998:179). However, more recent literature and practice emphasises the need for the evaluator to work with the organisation to reconstruct the programme theory.

This exercise is based on sources, such as (a) existing theory and research; (b) implicit theory, which is based on the unarticulated assumptions and experience of programme staff; and (c) emergent theory, which is developed from data collection. Moreover, the exercise is based on (d) theory developed by an evaluator or integrated with, or based on, the best combination of all previous types of theories (Coryn *et al.*, 2011). However, it is demonstrated in Chapter 7 that the reconstruction of programme theory can be affected by factors, such as staff turnover, a lack of data and the time it takes to conduct an evaluation from its inception. This is one of the constraints to the use of evaluations in the agricultural sector.

Step 10: Appropriate Methods

At this point, the purposes and uses of the evaluation are identified and prioritised; KEQs are reviewed and refined in line with the purpose; and the underlying assumptions (theory of change) of the programme are unpacked. The next step is negotiating appropriate methods to provide relevant data and generate credible findings that support intended use by PIUs (Patton, 2012:263; Ramirez & Brodhead, 2013:55). This stage is about deciding methods, measurement and design (Patton, 2009:257). Because UFE is methodologically neutral, the methods and data collection tools are chosen based on the KEQs that are defined during the earlier steps (Ramirez & Brodhead, 2013:55; Patton, 2012).

A variety of options may be considered: qualitative and quantitative data; naturalistic, experimental and quasi-experimental designs; purposeful and probabilistic sampling approaches; greater and lesser emphasis on generalisations; and alternative ways of dealing with potential threats to validity, reliability and utility (Patton, 2009:257). In UFE, the overriding principle in deciding on the appropriate method is utility, which is about whether the results obtained from these methods are useful – and actually used (Patton, 2009:257).

The issue of who is responsible for deciding on methods and design remains contested in the literature and the practice of evaluation. For instance, the AEA's Guiding Principles places the responsibility on evaluators "to design and conduct studies that are technically sound and that adequately address the evaluation questions driving the project" (Morris, 2011:136). However, the defining factor of participatory approaches to evaluation is the engagement of participants in the evaluation process, rather than any specific set of methods or techniques (Chouniard, 2013:241). In these approaches, the primary issue is not about the choice of methods but whose voices to include, how to include them and who will speak for whom (Greene, 2000). Therefore, decisions about methods come from participants and from the needs of a programme, rather from any a priori philosophical or methodological preference (Hall, 1992).

Similarly, in UFE the choice of methods is made in consultation with users (Ramirez & Brodhead, 2013:55). UFE is based on the premise that decisions about methods and measurement are not primarily technical, and therefore not the responsibility of the evaluator alone (Patton, 2012:264). The evaluator has a stake in the quality of the evaluation, while the PIUs have a stake in ensuring a credible evaluation that meets their information requirements. Therefore, UFE proposes that the evaluator and PIUs negotiate the design, select methods and make measurements decisions (Patton, 2012). Some of the key tasks in this step are to select methods to answer PIUs' priority questions and ensure that the results obtained from the chosen methods will be able to be used as intended. Moreover, this step entails selecting an ideal design and methods that can actually be implemented, given inevitable constraints of resources and time, and not identifying and attending to threats to data quality, credibility and utility (Patton, 2013:11).

There are a number of challenges to note in relation to the selection of methods and a design for an evaluation. Firstly, Bamberger, Rugh, Church and Fort (2004:6) caution that time and budget constraints may compromise many of the basic principles of sound evaluation design, such as random sampling, specification of a programme theory, instrument development, control for researcher bias and general quality control. These constraints are often caused by clients who commission evaluation late mostly to make funding decisions, which means that it is impossible to collect baseline data for methodological, budgetary, political and logistical reasons, and thus methodologies that are compatible with late evaluation are used (Bamberger *et al.*, 2004:6).

To enable evaluators to undertake methodologically sound evaluations, even with limitations of budget, time and data, the shoestring evaluation approach was developed (Bamberger *et al.*, 2004:06). The approach entails "tools for working within limitations of budget, time, and data, while at the same time providing a framework for the identification of threats to the validity or adequacy of the evaluation findings, and guidelines for addressing the different threats once they have been identified" (Bamberger *et al.*, 2004:06).

Secondly, because commissioners of evaluation may have methodological preferences, their terms of reference might specify the scope of the evaluation, the approach as well as the evaluation plan and then propose a methodology (Independent Evaluation Group, 2015:21). For instance, in the USA and Canada, federal departments are said to prefer specific methodological approaches to research and evaluation, at the expense of what are considered less “scientific” approaches (Chouinard, 2013:240; Chelimsky, 2007:13; House, 2004:6). In particular, federal policy in Canada gives preference to evaluations that are based on experimental and quasi-experimental designs as well as other quantitative measures (Chouinard, 2013:240). The Government Accountability Office (GAO) and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in the USA substitute less rigorous and scientific approaches, with an overfocus on performance management; impact and outcome evaluation; and experimental and quasi-experimental approaches (Chouinard, 2013:240). While these examples do not paint a global picture, they nonetheless demonstrate clear cases of discrepancy in conceptualising and utilising evaluations as well as the narrow manner in which evaluation is institutionalised in certain organisations (Norris & Kushner, 2007).

Step 11: Understanding Potential Methods Controversies

The potential advantage of making PIUs participate in the selection of methods and design is that it can enhance their skills and research experience, as they become immersed in, and give input on, the specifics of the data collection process (Ramirez & Broadhead, 2013:56). By actively participating, PIUs’ understanding of methodological strengths and weaknesses will improve while their ability to make data collection decisions will increase (Patton, 2013:11). The responsibility lies with the evaluator to make PIUs understand the methodological options. In addition, collaborative decision-making provides some assurance that the methods used will be practical, cost-effective, and ethical (Ramirez & Broadhead, 2013:56). The underlying assumption of this approach is that PIUs understand the methods and their limitations or at least have the necessary capacity to engage in methodological appraisal and choices.

Accordingly, in Step 11, the evaluator has to ensure that PIUs understand the potential controversies surrounding the methods and their implications (Patton, 2012:284). This highlights the fact that the existence of methodological ideologies and paradigms has profound implications for decisions about methods (Patton, 2012:284). PIUs must be made aware of these complexities because they are expected to negotiate the methods. Thus, the evaluator has to engage PIUs in methodological debates as well as helping them understand and consider the implication of the choice of methods on the credibility and utility of the particular evaluation being designed (Patton, 2013:12).

In practice, this might prove to be difficult, depending on the time available and the level of knowledge amongst PIUs. In the end, decisions may be made based on available information, (as presented by the evaluator), and not necessarily on the best choice amongst all the available options. In addition, evaluation practice in the South African public sector indicates that the methodological issues are part of the bidding process, rather than an outcome of discussion between the evaluator and PIUs. In other words, evaluators are appointed based in part on the methodology they profess. Therefore, when they start an evaluation, they just use the methodology with which they are familiar.

12: Simulate Use of Findings

Simulation is defined as “the use of situations or events that seem real but are not real, especially in order to help people deal with such situations or events” (Cambridge Business English Dictionary, 2020). This is the crux of Step 12, which entails a dress rehearsal of the evaluation whereby the evaluator engages PIUs in a simulation exercise in which findings are fabricated and interpreted to verify that the expected data will lead to usable findings (Patton, 2012:309; Ramirez & Brodhead, 2013:59). This is done before the actual data are collected. However, it is important to note that simulation in this context is not about piloting the instrument but rather simulating the data that is expected to be generated (Ramirez & Brodhead, 2013:59).

Simulation is useful in that simulated findings may help PIUs to determine whether it is necessary to revise the KEQs or the proposed methods; moreover, it ensures confirmation of whether the findings are consistent with the required data in answering

the questions (Ramirez & Brodhead, 2013:59). It helps PIUs to reflect on the actual uses and redefine them if the simulated findings do not meet expectations, as well as providing an opportunity to engage PIUs whose engagement in earlier steps was limited (Ramirez & Brodhead, 2013:60; Patton, 2009:12).

The main purpose of simulation is to do as follows:

- Make sure that all the relevant data for interpretation and use are going to be collected
- Train and prepare stakeholders for the real analysis later
- Use scenarios prior to data collection in order to set realistic goals about what the results would look like
- Use scenarios to help build commitment to use (Patton, 2012:310)

Based on the likely costs and expected uses determined in the simulation step, the final task is for the PIUs to make a clear decision to proceed with the data collection (Patton, 2009:12). This takes the process to Step 13.

Step 13: Gather Data

At this point, the evaluation questions and purpose have been finalised; the programme theory reviewed or reconstructed; the methods and design selected; and the simulation of the use of findings conducted. Thus, the planning and design phases of the evaluation have been concluded. Stage 13 ushers in the execution of the project through data collection. In UFE, data collection is undertaken with the ongoing attention to use them (Patton, 2012:32; Ramirez & Brodhead, 2013:63). This is done through ensuring that the PIUs are also informed and actively involved in the collection of data (Ramirez & Brodhead, 2013:63; Patton, 2012). The level of involvement of PIUs varies from being informed of developments and preliminary findings to being intimately involved in data collection to the point of having the capacity to propose ways of summarising the findings

(Ramirez & Brodhead, 2013:63). However, the trend is for the evaluator to take over the bulk of data collection and synthesis

The data collection process has to be undertaken in such a way that the evaluation is not compromised. Evaluators need to do the following to ensure use:

- (a) Manage data collection diligently to ensure quality findings while keeping intended users informed about any adjustments and their reasons
- (b) Manage participatory approaches to data collection by facilitating the active involvement of non-researchers in data collection to support high-quality learning
- (c) Keep PIUs informed about how the process is going
- (d) Provide feedback and report on interim findings
- (e) Keep the PIUs engaged and involved without overburdening them (Patton, 2012; Patton, 2013:12; Ramirez & Brodhead, 2013).

The participation of PIU requires that data collection that follows the UFE approach is ethical. For example, there is a need to remain neutral and unbiased; individuals should be able to choose to participate freely, without coercion; and participants' privacy and decency should be respected (Mark, Kristen & Campbell, 1999:48). At the heart of the ethical collection of data is the assumption that information provided is confidential and that the findings will be anonymous.

When PIUs collect data, they might have to interview people who are expected to give an appraisal and feedback on their own work. If participants are aware of this, they should be allowed to decline to participate or the interviewees might potentially not offer their true opinion. In addition, the principle of privacy would be compromised because the PIUs would know who the respondents are by virtue of having interviewed them. Thus, to preserve the integrity of the data, it is advisable for PIUs not to collect data but rather to be informed of developments regularly.

Step 14: Organise and Present Data

Once the data have been collected, the next task is to organise, analyse and present them. Again, the evaluator organises and presents the data and preliminary findings to facilitate use by PIUs (Patton, 2013:14). A UFE framework for engaging findings stipulates four distinct processes for making sense of evaluation findings (Patton, 2012:337):

- (a) Analysis: basic analysis of what was found; (ask the question “what?”)
- (b) Interpretation: determining what the findings mean (ask the question “what is the significance/relevance?”)
- (c) Judgement: determining the merit, worth and significance (ask the question “so what?”)
- (d) Recommendations: adding the action implication of the findings (ask the question “now what?”)

The PIUs remain actively involved in the data analysis, interpretation, judgement and recommendations (Patton, 2012:337; Ramirez, 2013:66). Nonetheless, the greater responsibility lies with the evaluator, who must ensure that raw data are organised into an understandable and useable format that addresses and illuminates the main evaluation questions. Moreover, the evaluator should make sure that the PIUs are actively involved in interpreting the findings, making evaluative judgments and generating recommendations (Patton, 2012:337; Ramirez, 2013:66). This means that the technical analysis is done by the evaluator, who then presents it in a simplified format to the PIUs.

UFE involves PIUs in data analysis because it benefits them in the following ways:

- (a) Improves their understanding of the findings
- (b) Instills a sense of ownership and commitment to utilisation
- (c) Helps them to interpret findings and make recommendations that are consistent with the intended uses

- (d) Enables them to suggest alternative ways of interpreting data based on their knowledge of the context
- (e) Results in a revision of the original set of uses, which in some cases are changed or regrouped for clarity and analysis (Ramirez & Brodhead, 2013:66; Patton, 2013:14)

However, a similar challenge as the one raised in data collection might arise in this step. Given the level of interest of the PIUs and the extent to which the data findings affect them, there is a risk of data being interpreted to fit certain expectations. For instance, if the objective is to suggest that staff of a programme has been inept, leading to lapses in the implementation and that such findings may result in action being taken against these officials, PIUs may try to ensure that the findings do not reflect this, by changing wording or context, or even scrapping the finding all together.

As Lipsky *et al.* (2007:08) note, organisational clients nearly always wish to emphasise the best features of their programme and deemphasise the worst (Lipsky, Seeber, Avgar & Scanza, 2007:08). The responsibility again lies with the evaluator to ensure that the objectivity or even the integrity of the data and findings is not compromised. The rejection of adverse findings is discussed in Chapter 7. Effectively, there is a practice of programme managers not participating in the whole evaluation value chain but come on board when findings are discussed. At this point, they come to defend the programme from what they think is attack because they have not participated in the entire evaluation process.

Step 15: Prepare an Evaluation Report

In Step 15, an evaluation report is prepared to facilitate the dissemination of significant findings to expand their influence (Patton, 2012:365). The UFE report must be focused on serving the PIUs' priority intended uses of the evaluation as determined in Step 7. It encompasses the findings and recommendations agreed upon with PIUs in the previous step. Operationally, the primary tasks in this step are to determine what kinds of reporting formats, styles and venues are appropriate; deliver reports in time to affect important decisions; and decide if the findings merit wider dissemination (Patton, 2013:15).

In order to facilitate use, the report draft must be of good quality and, especially, user-friendly. Patton (2012) stipulates five principles of UFE reporting that should be as follows:

- (a) Intentional and purposeful
- (b) Focused on PIUs and their priority questions
- (c) Supported by graphics and other visuals to communicate findings succinctly and powerfully
- (d) Aimed at preparing users to engage with and learn from negative findings
- (e) Disseminated in the form of a report

In many instances, the report is seen as the pinnacle of the evaluation. However, it is important to understand that it is an output not the outcome of the evaluation (Patton, 2012:4; Ramirez & Brodhead, 2013:74). The outcome of an evaluation is its use. By the time the report is finalised, the PIUs would have actively participated in each step in a manner that ensures use. These PIUs would be using the evaluation after all. In the process, they would have potentially learned from the exercise, for example, how to unpack programme theory and decide on the key questions as well as the purpose of the evaluation or even methods. Moreover, during the learning process, use would have already occurred. Nonetheless, the report is important for general stakeholders who have not participated in the evaluation. The format and dissemination of the report facilitates their engagement with it and perhaps its general use. Therefore, the dissemination of the report must be done in such a way that use is facilitated. In fact, the evaluation report is the only evidence for partners or external critics who have not been part of the whole process (Seberova & Malcik, 2010).

Step 16: Follow up with Primary Intended Users

Once the report is presented and disseminated, the evaluator is expected to follow up with PIUs to facilitate and enhance use (Patton, 2012:380). UFE proposes that the evaluation design and contract should extend beyond producing a report so that evaluators are not expected to do follow-up work as a matter of goodwill (Patton,

2012:381). Use is promoted by following up and working with PIUs to apply the findings and implement recommendations (Patton, 2013:16). In this step, the evaluator is expected to plan follow-ups (including working through the budget) with PIUs; proactively pursue utilisation by keeping PIUs engaged post-dissemination of the report; and explore prospects to complement the evaluation, particularly when there is new data to answer emergent or previously unanswered questions (Patton, 2013:16).

While UFE propounds that the evaluation contract should extend beyond the report to ensure that the evaluator is able to do a follow-up, this may not always be practical because terms of contracts are often determined before an evaluator is contracted. Therefore, it may have to happen as a matter of goodwill on the part of the evaluator. However, since professional evaluation is a market-based activity in which economic conditions play a dominant role, follow-up may depend largely on contractual obligations rather than goodwill (Smith, 1998:177).

Furthermore, although this step is indeed important, it places too much responsibility on the evaluator to ensure that the evaluation is used. Apart from having facilitated an evaluation whereby PIUs learn, participate and determine its direction and purpose, the evaluator is now expected to champion the implementation of the findings, or even keep the evaluation alive. If the process has been effective, the PIUs should be the primary champions of the implementation of the findings. An external evaluator should not be part of the life of the programme forever because he/she also has other projects or work to undertake.

Step 17: Metaevaluation of Use

Metaevaluation has become a very important fibre of the evaluation field. Introducing the term for the first time in 1969, Michael Scriven defined it as any evaluation of an evaluation, evaluation system or evaluation device (Stufflebeam, 2000:96; Patton, 2012:388). To operationalise this, metaevaluation is also defined as systematic reviews of evaluations to determine the quality of their processes and findings (Cooksy & Caracelli, 2009:2; Seberova & Malcik, 2010). The definition provided by Stufflebeam (2005:185) adds that such a process must be based on the profession's standards and

principles. Metaevaluation can either be formative, when undertaken before or while an evaluation is underway, or summative, when conducted after the completion of an evaluation. (Stufflebeam, 2005:183; Scriven, 2001; Cooksy & Caracelli, 2009:2). Formative metaevaluation seeks to improve the summative metaevaluation and to help audiences see an evaluation's strengths and weaknesses as well as judging its merit and worth (Stufflebeam, 2005:184).

There are a number of benefits associated with the practice of metaevaluation:

- Enhances use of evaluation by addressing the defensibility of an evaluation's process and results
- Ensures sound evaluation findings and conclusions, improves evaluation practices and ensures that institutions administer efficient and effective evaluation systems
- Enables evaluation commissioners to reject invalid evaluative conclusions and rather use sound evaluation information with confidence
- Helps to assure that an institution's evaluation services are defensible, functional, and worth the investment (Cooksy & Caracelli, 2005:31; Stufflebeam, 2005:183)

The practice of metaevaluation is driven largely by a concern with evaluation quality (Cooksy & Caracelli, 2009:2). It is about ensuring that the evaluation is sound or determining the strength and weakness of an evaluation. All this is done against a set of professional standards and principles as outlined, for an example, in Stufflebeam's (2005) definition. The centrepiece is ensuring the quality of an evaluation.

However, UFE proposes a different process with metaevaluation of use focusing on evaluation use and the factors that affect it (Patton, 2012:388). Although metaevaluation does have a dedicated use focus, the difference is that the primary criterion for UFE metaevaluation is whether the PIUs used the evaluation in the intended ways (Patton, 2012:393). Therefore, the evaluator has to engage in systematic reflective practice about the evaluation, its processes and uses with PIUs (Patton, 2013:17). The key questions

would focus on whether and how the evaluation was actually used. Thus, Step 17 is a systematic reflection of how the UFE process evolved, which gives the PIUs and the facilitator the opportunity to learn from one another's experiences and from the evaluation outcomes (Ramirez & Brodhead, 2013:73). The focus on use and not on quality also means that the UFE report is disseminated without metaevaluation. By the time metaevaluation of use is conducted, the report would have long been disseminated.

Because metaevaluation of use is an actual evaluation in itself, it necessitates the selection of an appropriate metaevaluation evaluator different from the original evaluator and sometimes a new set of PIUs (Patton, 2013:17). The use of a new independent evaluator helps strengthen the accuracy, objectivity and relevance of the findings of the original evaluation process (Seberova & Malcik, 2010). The metaevaluation of use also follows the same steps for conducting a UFE. This would include determining the primary purpose and uses of the metaevaluation, the primary standards as well as criteria to be applied in the metaevaluation (Patton, 2013:17). The need for stakeholders (PIUs) to participate in this process is also emphasised by Stufflebeam (2005:185).

The first challenge of metaevaluation is that it requires the organisation to budget time and resources. This means that the organisation undertaking the evaluation must have made provision for this. However, in practice, most institutions do not even have an adequate budget for evaluation. Bamberger *et al.*'s (2004) shoestring evaluation was developed because of a recognition of the budget, time and data limitations of most evaluations. Effectively, whether metaevaluation is conducted or not is determined by the appetite of the organisation being evaluated, rather than on the evaluator. Secondly, the practice of metaevaluation is still not widespread, and most organisations do not have the tools to undertake it. These constraints do not necessarily make this step unworkable, but they indicate the limitations to the possibility of it being undertaken. It might be prudent to view it as a recommendation, rather than a required step.

3.3. Critique and Limitations of UFE

A critique of the UFE approach can be contextualised in at least two issues that permeate most of the points discussed in the section. Firstly, evaluations are undertaken by a

diverse set of people, institutions and organisations. This includes civil society, international aid organisations, private companies and state departments (government). Even amongst these institutions, there are geographic and developmental differences. This diversity necessitates the adaption of UFE to the needs (context) of the specific situation (policies, protocols, procedures and practices) of different organisations (Visser, Kusters, Guijt, Roefs & Buizer, 2014:13; Chelimsky, 1998). A case in point is the adaptation of the model in line with the specific practices of the Australian Aid programme (Crowley, 2018).

Secondly, UFE was founded on evaluations conducted in independent and small community groups (Crowley, 2018:10). In fact, Patton cut his teeth on (and still works with) small, community-based programmes, such as those in rural, northern Manitoba, Canada (Reed, 1999:152; Patton, 1997:25). Patton himself makes a distinction between client-centred and consumer-centred evaluation, (Donaldson, Patton, Fetterman & Scriven, 2010:23). The former refers to evaluations conducted to obtain clients, while the latter is conducted for the sake of existing consumers, for an employer, or simply “for the record (Donaldson *et al.*, 2010:23). Unlike evaluations commissioned by large clients such as government departments, independent and smaller community-based evaluations allow for negotiation and flexibility in the terms of reference and the implementation of an evaluation (Reed, 1999). Indeed, Reed (1999) observes that Patton himself negotiates directly with the grantees, and thereby secures a remarkable degree of flexibility and discretion for himself.

However, most evaluators do not choose their clients and respond to the demand for their services. In contrast, Patton (1997:366) tends to “choose to work with clients who are hungry for quality information to improve programs”. This difference is key in that it limits the latitude of most evaluators in assessing the readiness of an organisation to use the evaluation; choose and secure the participation of PIUs; or amend KEQs. These are all fundamental principles of UFE that would prove difficult for most evaluators to apply in certain settings. In practice, there would generally be little or no space for negotiation at all.

However, the limitations of the UFE approach discussed in this chapter do not render it irrelevant. In fact, there is no doubt that UFE makes one of the most persuasive contributions to enhancing the use of evaluations. However, without variation or adaptation of the model, it may be impractical to apply it to some institutions, including the South African public sector. In the critique below, the problematic areas are discussed and the section concludes with a suggestion of how the approach can be adapted to address them. The identified limitations are categorised into (a) common evaluation limitations; (b) structural limitations; and (c) UFE limitations.

3.3.1. Common Evaluation Limitations

Evaluation limitations are not peculiar to UFE but are common to other evaluation approaches as well. However, in UFE, these limitations are a make-or-break factor in comparison to other approaches. In other evaluations, these limitations are just generic challenges, but in UFE, they determine whether an evaluation is used or not. Therefore, although they are problematic in any evaluation, they are a matter of great concern in UFE, given its focus on use.

In particular, evaluator competence, PIU competency and PIU turnover have been identified as common evaluator limitations. Thus, while they are not unique to UFE, the approach is much more affected by these, compared to other types of evaluation. In addition, although these limitations do not indicate that UFE is irrelevant per se, they require mitigating measures to be put in place to manage them. There is the risk that they might compromise the credibility of a UFE, which may not be the case with other approaches.

3.3.1.1. Evaluator Competency

In addition to the generic skills required to conduct credible evaluation, UFE accentuates interpersonal and group facilitation skills because of its focus on direct engagement with PIUs (Patton, 2012:42). The 4th edition of Patton's *Utilization-Focused Evaluation* emphasised the need to train evaluators in soft skills, such as interpersonal, people, communication, negotiation and conflict resolution skills, to ensure that they are competent to engage with stakeholders (Patton, 2008:19). It is argued that analytical and

technical skills as well social science knowledge aren't sufficient to get evaluations used" (Patton & Alkin, 2004:8). The evaluator has to build relationships; facilitate groups; manage conflict; and walk political tight ropes (Kinhart, 2010:593). This requires effective interpersonal communication skills to capitalise on the importance of the personal factor (Patton & Alkin, 2004:8). The importance of evaluator competency is demonstrated by the dedication of Step 2 to assessing the competency of an evaluator to UFE.

The primary challenge is that apart from evaluation standards set in some countries and in the growing literature, there is still no universal consensus on competencies for evaluators (Cousins, 2005; Ghore *et al.*, 2006:109). Secondly, few university programmes provide formal training in the interpersonal skills required for participant-orientated approaches such as UFE (Stevahn *et al.*, 2005:45; Morris, 2011:139). In fact, Chelimsky (2008:400) argues that the training that evaluators receive assumes unthreatened evaluative independence, and it concentrates on methodology. It emphasises the technical aspect of evaluation rather than soft skills. That is why Donaldson *et al.* (2010:24) argue against including good interpersonal skills as a minimum requirement for evaluators because most professional evaluators are not consultants.

Therefore, while soft skills are in short supply in the evaluation fraternity, at the heart of UFE is the possession of these skills. Without the ability to facilitate, negotiate and persuade people, it is not possible to undertake a UFE. Thus, requirement for additional competencies in this context faces a serious challenge. This becomes even worse in countries such as South Africa, where evaluations until only recently were not widely conducted. There is still a limited supply of good evaluators in the first place. Therefore, finding evaluators with additional competencies will be a challenge.

Nonetheless, this challenge can be mitigated by a requirement that an evaluator must either possess a certain threshold level of competence, or form a partnership with other evaluators who possess the competencies he/she lacks (Morris, 2011:139). Therefore, generic competencies can be balanced by forming a partnership with another person who has the skills required for a UFE.

3.3.1.2. Evaluator Independence

Similarly, the independence of an evaluator may be compromised. Independence refers to “the freedom of the evaluator to pursue the rigour of the evaluation process without compromise to the imperatives and pressures emerging from the immediate political and organisational context, the commissioners of the evaluation or its associated stakeholders” (Markiewicz, 2019). Therefore, while participation is commendable, a predicament surfaces when there is pressure (overt or covert) to curtail independence or compromise the objectivity of the evaluator (Markiewicz, 2019). There is research evidence that, most frequently, evaluators are pressured by a stakeholder to misrepresent a study’s findings (Morris, 2011:140).

The PIUs are not innocent souls that come to the process without their own personal stakes in the outcome of the evaluation. For instance, commissioners of an evaluation prefer evaluation approaches or outcomes that interconnect with their organisations’ mandate and interests (Markiewicz, 2019). However, beneficiaries desire an evaluation that supports their wish for a programme to continue, alter or cease (Markiewicz, 2019). In the process of engaging with these interests throughout the value chain, the evaluator risks being put under pressure to make certain compromises or follow certain approaches. This will eventually compromise the independence of the evaluator, the credibility of the evaluation and even its use.

At risk is also the related notion of objectivity, which refers to “the evaluator’s capacity to undertake un-biased and objective assessments and form conclusions during the evaluation” (Markiewicz, 2019). Evaluation is a political and value-laden space with the work of evaluators being heavily influenced by political factors outside the professional community (House, 2004:7). In this environment, the objectivity of the evaluator may be compromised by commercial interests and pressure from the client. For instance, a consultant may experience a conflict of interest between satisfying the needs of the client (and potentially gaining further contracts) and upholding the objectivity and independence of his/her findings (Markiewicz, 2019:1). Similarly, the objectivity of the internal evaluator may also be compromised when there is a need to balance independence and his/her career progression with organisational imperatives and loyalties (Markiewicz, 2019:2).

This ethical dilemma can intensify if the commissioner of the evaluation is the immediate line manager of the internal evaluation.

It may be argued that evaluators using any approach may face similar independence and objectivity risks. However, the collaborative, negotiation and participatory approach that UFE promotes makes it more susceptible to political pressure than other approaches. UFE would require a very skilled and experienced evaluator to maintain independence in the face of political pressure from commissioners of an evaluation who participate fully in each stage of the evaluation.

In other evaluations, metaevaluation is suggested as a quality assurance mechanism to determine whether an evaluation was carried out according to professional standards. In particular, summative metaevaluation assists in making such a determination before the report of the evaluation is accepted and disseminated. However, UFE uses metaevaluation differently as a mechanism to determine the use of an evaluation. Given the risks of manipulation in the approach, it may be necessary for metaevaluation to be used as commonly understood and practised. This might assist in identification and correction in instances where the data or the findings are manipulated.

3.3.1.3. Primary Intended User Competency

In UFE, there is the potential for the manipulation of methods, findings and recommendations because of its specific focus on involving PIUs in the evaluation process and building positive relationships. The defining feature of UFE is the active participation of PIUs in the entire value chain of the evaluation. Most importantly, PIUs and the evaluator determine the technical aspects of the evaluation, such as the methods, the design, the data collection and the data analysis. In addition, PIUs assess the competency of the evaluator. These technical decisions and exercises surely require some level of competency on the part of PIUs. While the evaluator guides and facilitates the process, it is still necessary for PIUs to have sufficient fundamental competency to make a judgement about the best methodological option, for example. Their input into technical decisions about method and design depends on their knowledge and capacity to process the options provided by the evaluator. This dilemma raises questions about

the ability of an overall approach to evaluation to do justice to systematic inquiry (Morris, 2011:137).

In line with the suggestion that UFE should be institutionalised, an organisation that has adopted UFE can be expected to ready itself by, for example, building the necessary basic capacity to make sound technical decisions. For instance, it may provide basic training in evaluation methods to a selected group of officials who are likely to serve as PIUs in any given evaluation undertaken in that organisation.

The other risk of involving PIUs in technical decisions, such as those about method and design, is that it opens the evaluation to manipulation by powerful forces. There is evidence that despite the evaluation following a rigorous methodology, those with key interests have found a way to influence the findings of an evaluation. For instance, House (2008:416) finds that despite using randomised designs and double blinding, drug companies find ways of “producing the results they want, including manipulation of treatment, selection of sample, control of data, and calculated publication”. He warns that society has entered an era when evaluations are controlled by sponsors to produce the findings they want (House, 2008:416). While this can happen in any evaluation, the participatory approach of UFE, even in technical aspects, would provide a perfect opportunity for those with key interests to manipulate findings. In UFE, even the findings are negotiated and recommendations canvassed with PIUs.

3.3.1.4. Turnover of Primary Intended Users

Patton (2008:567) identifies the turnover of PIUs as the greatest vulnerability or the Achilles heel of UFE. While this can be mitigated by working with multiple PIUs so that a departure of a few is alleviated by those remaining, there is a real possibility of huge turnover (Patton, 2003:234). In addition, the process might be reignited by renegotiating the design and using commitments with new PIUs (Patton, 2008:567; Patton, 2003:234). An example of this is Franke *et al.*'s (2003) evaluation of California's Office of Child Abuse Prevention during which three PIUs left the bureau immediately prior to the dissemination of their first year findings. Although, this evaluation was rescued, dealing with the turnover

of PIUs can collapse the entire evaluation or undermine its eventual use (Kellagen, Stufflebean & Wingate, 2003:234).

The turnover of PIUs may slow down the evaluation process, as it affects both relationships within the team and knowledge transfer (Ramirez & Brodhead, 2013:35; Patton, 2003:234). Compounding the matter is that most evaluations have set budget and strict timeframes, which may make it impossible to renegotiate. Moreover, the new arrival's commitment to use is not guaranteed, as they may come with an agenda that is different from that of the original PIUs (Patton, 2003:234). While the turnover of PIUs can be mitigated, it remains one of the primary risks of the UFE approach. Therefore, an organisation that undertakes UFE must build in the means to address this problem should it arise.

3.3.2. Structural Constraints

Most organisations have internal structures or frameworks that determine how evaluations will be undertaken. These structures or their absence has far-reaching implications for the use of evaluations. Below is a discussion of four structures that have been identified, namely (a) steering committees; (b) evaluation planning; (c) organisational structure; and (d) selection of PIUs.

3.3.2.1. Steering Committees

Many governments and nongovernmental organisations have evaluation policies or frameworks. These policies provide a framework for processes, structures and principles to guide programme evaluations (Independent Evaluation Group, 2015:11). In the public sector, evaluation policies may also set out the mechanisms for managing and coordinating evaluations across the whole of government (Independent Evaluation Group, 2015:11). These policies fundamentally guide the way in which evaluations are to be undertaken and indicate the space that is available or not for an evaluator to negotiate the process. The challenge is when these policies are not consistent with the principles of UFE, thereby making it difficult for the process to flow as envisaged.

One key feature of evaluation policies or frameworks is the establishment of steering committees. This practice is not only common but is also considered good practice (European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, 2016:6; CFE Research, 2014:2). The central purpose and function of these structures is to plan evaluation, which includes determining the evaluand, the purpose and the questions of evaluation; and the resources (time and people) required for the evaluation, for example (CFE Research, 2014:2). In some instances, the evaluation steering committee is also responsible for the selection of an evaluator; receives reports on the progress of the evaluation and issues arising; receives the evaluation findings; and works with partners to learn from the findings (CFE Research, 2014:02; Mcneish and Scott, 2020). Effectively, the steering committee comprises the PIUs.

The main challenge is that the steering committee will plan the key features of the evaluation (purpose and key questions) before an evaluator is appointed. By so doing, the influence of the evaluator on the key aspects of the evaluation, such as purpose and key questions, becomes limited. Furthermore, the steering committee's effectiveness in UFEs depends on whether its members are the real users of evaluations. In the event that the committee is established based on positions held in an organisation, rather than responsibility for and interest in the programme evaluated, then the use of the evaluation may be limited. Nonetheless, in some cases, the steering committee may even enhance the UFE by shortening the communication corridor between the evaluator and the final users.

3.3.2.2. Evaluation Planning

The planning phase of an evaluation is key to its success, credibility and use. Effective planning also helps to ensure that the evaluation runs smoothly and to minimise the number of needed adjustments once it has begun (Independent Evaluation Group, 2015:07). Steps 1 -5 of UFE are primarily the planning phase for an evaluation. In many instances, before an evaluator is contracted, these steps are undertaken fully or partially. Therefore, essentially, an organisation decides when it is ready or requires an evaluation to be conducted. It decides which programme will be the subject of evaluation and for what purpose. In many instances, evaluation serves mainly as a mechanism of upward

accountability, generally from grant recipients towards donors or oversight bodies (Ramirez & Brodhead, 2013:82). In the process, the organisation also decides which competencies the evaluator that it appoints should have.

These decisions are often taken by a group of officials (PIUs) determined by the organisational protocols and systems. Therefore, the appointed evaluator does not start the evaluation planning from nothing and starts the process within the confines of what was determined by the commissioning organisation. Through Steps 7-10, the evaluator may at best be able to add or make amendments to KEQs. However, this may also be limited by the fact that the evaluation purpose and key questions are part of a contractual and funding obligation.

In order to remedy this, it may be necessary that UFE be institutionalised. This means that an organisation adopts this approach for all its evaluations. It becomes part of its evaluation policy and practice. The implication is that the organisation will look at ways to ready itself for UFEs; set out UFE specific competencies for contracting evaluators; and allow an appointed evaluator sufficient latitude either to participate in planning or to make necessary adjustments to the evaluation together with intended users, as they deem necessary. Of course, such an approach must consider the limitations of UFE and build in supporting mechanisms. In the final analysis, this is what the current research sought to achieve with the development of an adapted integrated model for effective utilisation of evaluations in the agricultural sector.

3.3.2.3. Organisational structure

The structure of the organisation and the chain of authority also pose challenges to the identification of PIUs. In particular, the public sector tends to have embedded hierarchical organisational practices and processes. Despite good intentions, the extent that an organisational structure remains hierarchical makes it difficult for a PE process to take root (King, 1998:63). Most organisations are hierarchical, and therefore become reluctant to assign the control of the evaluation to users who are not part of management (Ramirez & Brodhead, 2013:34). In some instances, funding agencies attempting to use UFE may insist that the focus be mainly on upward accountability, which in turn does not normally

leave room for a focus on other uses, users, or forms of accountability (Ramirez & Brodhead, 2013:34).

In hierarchical organisations such as the public sector, managers are responsible for activities in their domain, and it may be unfair to ask them to relinquish control and to remain responsible simultaneously (King, 1998:63). Therefore, it becomes difficult for an evaluator to choose participants in an evaluation. In most instances, the participants do so because of a position they hold, rather than own organisational interests. Furthermore, additional challenges to evaluation design and influence in the public sector arise as a result of diverse partnerships as well as complex political and organisational factors (Appleton-Dyer, Clinton, Carswell & Mcneill, 2012:533). Identifying and securing the participation of PIUs in this case becomes very difficult and complicated.

3.3.2.4. Selection of PIUs

The structure of the organisation may also affect how PIUs are selected. For instance, in some organisational settings such as the public sector, key participants are selected before an evaluation is commissioned. The identification of the user(s) of an evaluation is an important power- and value-laden exercise the consequence of which may affect the whole evaluation process (Ramirez & Brodhead, 2013:82). Therefore, while UFE challenges the evaluator to narrow the potential list of stakeholders to a specific group of PIUs, in practice, an evaluator in the public sector works primarily with the officials responsible for the programme to be evaluated and M&E departments, while those responsible for making decisions engage with the various evaluation reports. This limits the extent to which the appointed evaluator works with the broader organisation to identify PIUs, who are often selected to participate in the evaluation based on the position and responsibility they hold in an organisation.

The practice in these organisations may also exclude PIUs who are located in a position that is external to the agency or department leading the evaluation. For instance, the NEPF process is primarily inward-looking and does not cater for PIUs who may be outside government departments, such as beneficiaries of a programme. In the case of the current study, this included farmers in the agricultural sector who were located outside

the agricultural department. It would have been key to have them as part of the PIU team. However, the NEPF (2012) simply asserts, “It is therefore advisable that key partners are involved in each step of the evaluation process” (DPME, 2011:11). Effectively, this is left to the discretion of the evaluation head, and therefore may not always be catered for. The department might resist the participation of farmers who are beneficiaries of a programme in the full value chain of the evaluation owing to a conflict of interests. This leaves only the officials of the department as key stakeholders and participants in the whole process.

Therefore, not all key stakeholders (PIUs) participate in the full value chain of the evaluation, and thus use the end product to hold the implementing agency accountable. In the process, developing the personal factor is constrained, as PIUs are physically distant from the evaluation exercise (Reed, 1999). Instead, the personal factor will be expressed in relation to the functionaries of the programme being evaluated. In most instances, these officials are neither the originators nor the decision-makers of the programme. At best, they might learn from the process and improve the implementation of the programme. Indeed, in some cases, proper selection will occur; however, in most cases the evaluator will have to work with a provided team and attempt to change its attitude towards evaluation in a manner that will enhance use.

Given these constraints, there is a strong case for the institutionalisation of the UFE approach, which would include the introduction of a change management process focusing on attitudinal change. Preskill and Torres (1999) support the introduction of a gradual change of culture, leadership, systems, structures, communication, teams and evaluation. This would be the essence of a proposed changed management process.

3.3.3. UFE Framework-Specific Barriers

The framework-specific barriers to UFE relate to the limitations that are associated specifically with the approach. In the context of the research, these limitations would require amendments to the model to make it applicable to the South African public sector.

3.3.3.1 The 17 Steps

While it is accepted that the UFE process is not neatly linear, sequential or mechanical and that there are interconnections amongst the steps and feedback loops, the application of the 17 steps to undertake an evaluation is too laborious, intricate and grueling to follow (Patton, 2012:13; Ramirez & Brodhead, 2013). An integrated model for the use of evaluation in the public sector needs to be simple and easy to follow within the confines of the protocols and systems of the sector. Therefore, the UFE model should be simplified by reducing the number of steps. However, there are three issues to be considered.

Firstly, the justification for increasing the number of steps from 12 to 17 was based on the need to make the model more effective in reaching its intended goals and to provide guidance for possible variations (such as introducing a theory of change) (Patton, 2012; Ramirez & Brodhead, 2013:5). However, the increase did not introduce anything new and simply reorganised the process by breaking down existing steps. At best, it illuminated some issues and provided a variation on others. Thus, despite this development, Ramirez and Brodhead (2013) published *Utilization-focused evaluation: a primer for evaluators* based on 12 steps rather than 17. Importantly, Patton (2013:87) acknowledged that despite its focus on 12 steps, the primer remains relevant to the practice of UFE. This means that the fundamental focus of the model remains the same. **Therefore, the simplification process could start with retaining the 12 twelve steps.**

Secondly, although metaevaluation (Step 17) is desirable and may facilitate use, it presents serious practical challenges. It has already been established that metaevaluation is another evaluation in itself, which follows the same principles or steps as the original evaluation. It may even require a new evaluator and PIUs. However, (a) because the evaluator is often not part of evaluation planning, metaevaluation might not be included in the terms of reference; (b) metaevaluation is not commonly practised and few organisations have tools for it; and (c) there might be no budget or human resources for it. **It is therefore proposed that metaevaluation be removed as a formal step and rather be recommended to the evaluating organisation.**

An alternative to summative metaevaluation in the public sector is to regulate use of evaluations by means of a practice note, gazette, or even policy. When use is regulated, it means that oversight bodies have a responsibility to ensure that the organisation does this by means of audits or presentations.

Thirdly, the planning of evaluation, particularly in the public sector, takes place before an evaluator is sourced. This means that there are certain decisions that are taken, which an evaluator will not be able to change. While some of these decisions may be reviewed and refined during the evaluation, others may not be changed at all. For example, the commissioning team (steering committee) also decides which competencies an evaluator should have to be appointed. Therefore, Step 2 (assessing evaluator competency) as envisaged in UFE occurs before an evaluator arrives. The organisation through the steering committee or evaluation manager decides whether it appoints one person or a team and which skills are required. ***Therefore, Step 2 (assessing evaluator competency) becomes moot.***

Instead, if UFE is institutionalised as proposed in 3.3.2.2, an evaluation team will be trained to know what competencies are necessary to use for this approach. Therefore, the team will be able to draft the ToR required for the use of the UFE approach and indicate the necessary competencies required. When interested evaluators are assessed, this requirement (criteria) will be used to assess evaluator competency and inform the appointment of a suitably qualified evaluator for the specific evaluation commissioned.

3.3.3.2 Time and Resources

The application of the UFE approach requires flexibility and sufficient time to engage fully with different users at different stages (INTRAC, 2017). However, insufficient resources and tight timeframes have been identified as challenges that sometimes prevent evaluation from being done well or at all (Rabie & Goldman, 2014:23). Allocating time to an evaluation has direct financial implications. Since external evaluators bill clients based on time spent, the longer an evaluator spends in an organisation, the costlier the exercise. The implication of this is that it may compromise general quality control and most of the basic principles of sound evaluation design, such as random sampling, specification of

the programme theory, instrument development and control for researcher bias (Bamberger et al., 2004:6). Thus, Bamberger *et al.* (2004) developed the shoestring evaluation approach to mitigate budget and time constraints.

In the UFE approach, there are two key issues that create time and budget problems. Firstly, the participatory approach and negotiation that feature in all the steps of the process is time consuming and expensive (House, 2004:13). Evaluators charge for the time spent on an evaluation to reimburse expenses, pay their salary and finance benefits (Smith, 1998:179). Therefore, the longer they stay, the higher the bill. Secondly, Step 16 (follow-up) and Step 17 (metaevaluation) both require budgets to be made available (Patton, 2012). As demonstrated in the evaluation planning section, if these steps are accommodated, they would require additional budgets. Not every organisation has the luxury of making such resources available. In fact, this is currently not common practice. ***Therefore, the limitation of budget and time simply serves to justify further the need to reduce the steps as canvassed in the previous section.***

3.3.4 Public Sector Related Barriers

While the issues discussed above cut across all sectors, it is important to reflect on a few that find particular expression in the public sector. The focus of this section of the discussion is on generic government/public sector-related barriers. In Chapter 4, the analysis will focus specifically on the South African public sector.

3.3.4.1. Political Interference

Political interference, defined as external pressure that may suppress, limit, delay, manipulate, or selectively use M&E output, is one of the biggest barriers and risks to the use of UFE in the public sector (De Lay & Manda, 2004:13). Understanding this requires a recognition of the main purpose of conducting evaluations in the public sector and of the government structure. Evaluations are conducted for three purposes in the public sector, namely accountability; knowledge (decision-making); and development (Chelimsky, 2008:400; Mackay, 1998). The evaluations for the purpose of accountability are aimed at the application of legislative oversight, assessing how an intervention is implemented and the processes involved (Chelimsky, 2008:400; Rabie & Goldman,

2014:03). In evaluations conducted for the purpose of knowledge, the focus is to produce new information intended to influence decision-making, improvement and prioritisation particularly in the budget process (Chelimsky, 2008:400; Rabie & Goldman, 2014:3; Mackay, 1998). Evaluations for the purpose of development aim to support an agency's mission and to protect its independence (Chelimsky, 2008:400) by addressing the key questions "so what?" and "why?" of government programmes and policies (Rabie & Goldman, 2014:04).

Weiss (1993) identifies three ways in which political considerations intrude evaluation. Firstly, evaluation deals with policies and programmes that are the creatures of political decisions. Secondly, evaluation enters the political arena because it is undertaken to feed into decision-making. In the third place, evaluation itself has a political stance because it makes political statements about the merits or demerits of a programme (Weiss, 1993:94).

Furthermore, much of the interference in evaluations stems from the structure of the state. As Legorreta (2015:7) finds, at the centre of evaluation politics is "the way in which the institutional framework provides actors with spaces of discretion that allow them to influence the process and outcomes of evaluation". In the public sector, the very need for evaluations emanates from its checks-and-balances structure, which is characterised by the separation of powers, legislative oversight and accountability to the public (Chelimsky, 2008:400; Mohan & Sullivan, 2006; Weiss, 1987). The doctrine of separation of powers pertains to the separation of the three spheres of the state: legislative, executive and judiciary. These are allocated specific functions, duties and responsibilities, with defined areas of competence and jurisdiction (Mojapelo, 2013:37). At the heart of separation of powers is the embedded notion of accountability whereby one arm of the state checks on the other. In particular, the system is created to ensure that there is no conflict of interest between the executive and the legislature; moreover legislative decision-making requires joint agreement by both bodies (Persson, Roland & Tabellini, 1997:6).

Typically, accountability and oversight entail the legislature monitoring the performance of the executive branch of the government via regular reports, oversight visits and

presentations. In this respect, the executive is keen to demonstrate that it is performing well, rather than revealing that its programmes are failing, which may be an outcome of the evaluation. Furthermore, democracies entail the public electing and holding public officials accountable. Therefore, there is no incentive for the state to produce self-assessment reports (evaluations) that reveal implementation or design failure. In fact, in mature democracies, adverse evaluations may result in electoral losses. Thus, because of the government structure, political infringements on the independence of the evaluator occurs “not exceptionally but routinely and regularly” (Chelimsky, 2008:400).

Such an infringement may occur at any stage of the evaluation, be it during the determination of key questions, the selection of methodology, or even throughout the whole process (Chelimsky, 2008:400; Mohan & Sullivan, 2006:8). Chelimsky (2008:405) identifies the design phase, the work stage and the end of the evaluation as the three stages when clashes commonly occur. The independence of an evaluation is at higher risk in the government sector because the very structure that triggers the need for evaluation in the first place also triggers the political maelstrom in which evaluative independence is so often tested (Chelmsky, 2008:400).

The ongoing tensions of politics threaten the independence of an evaluation in many ways. These include the political origins of some questions; questions that may hide a partisan or ideological purpose for evaluation; or tactically political pressures (deadlines) that intervene in the choice of the most appropriate design or prevent the collection of needed data (Chelmsky, 2008:404). It was demonstrated in the summary of Step 10 (appropriate methods) that some governments (in the USA in particular) dictate or have a preferred method of evaluation (Chouinard, 2013:240; Chelimsky, 2007:13; House, 2004:6). Since the selection of method or design ordinarily depends on the evaluation question, it makes sense for an institution to prefer one method to the other.

In some instances, out of fear of embarrassment, officials of the programme may impede a study’s performance and weaken its findings by hiding certain data or obscuring their decision processes (Chelimsky, 2008:404). In the health sector, De Lay and Manda (2004:25) point out that there have been numerous instances of selective evaluation use

to distort understanding about the severity of a disease and the need for specific interventions.

During the reporting or publication stage of an evaluation, sponsors and stakeholders can apply political pressure to make changes in report findings, language or presentation, or simply try to delay the study's appearance (Chelimsky, 2008:404). For example, House (2004:07) makes the claim that the Bush administration restricted and controlled information to conform with the official line in general. This claim was based on a statement issued by 20 Nobel laureates indicating that the Bush administration deliberately and systematically distorted scientific facts to support policy goals (House, 2004:6).

These risks mean that evaluators are challenged to promote the use of their work by managing the politics and all attempts at persuasion (Sullivan & Mohan, 2006:09). In order to do this, UFE proposes that at the initial phase, evaluators must try to understand the evaluation's political context and consider how these political factors might affect the eventual use of the evaluation (Patton, 2003). However, awareness of these risks alone is not sufficient, there is a real need to manage them and ensure that they do not compromise the evaluation. An effective management of these risks also hinges on an evaluation approach, which deliberately protects the evaluation against undue pressure and interest. This may entail limiting the role of PIUs in the determination of the methodology, execution of the evaluation and formulation of findings. Therefore, a model to be used effectively in the government sector must entail features that seek to ensure that politics and its interests do not compromise the independence and objectivity of an evaluation.

Furthermore, the public sector is bound to financial years, electoral and budget cycles. Any evidence produced for purposes of decision-making must coincide with these cycles; otherwise, it runs the risk of becoming irrelevant and not used. In practice, there is a mismatch between research and policy timetables, and public representative are under pressure to make a quick impact because of the short tenure (Davies, 2012:43; Rutter, 2012:17). If evaluations or research is lengthy, other changes may occur so that the

political climate at the completion of an evaluation may not be the same as it was at its commencement. For example, the programmes and policies being evaluated may be subject to influences, such as budget cuts, administrative changes, varying government support, public appraisal, media coverage and the implementation of additional or competing programmes (Pawson, 2006; Weiss, 1993).

While critical analysis has been biased towards the limitations of UFE, there is no doubt that it has some benefits:

- It is very important for evaluations in the public sector to be undertaken in a manner that enhances use. The resources spent on programmes and evaluations, the need to change the lives of poor communities as well as the transparency and accountability expected of the public sector makes use a must and not an option.
- UFE has developed over 50 years to become one of the most practical guides to conducting evaluations in a manner that facilitates use. Not only does it provide a broad philosophical framework but also a step-by-step guide on how evaluation can be conducted and used.
- The participatory and collaborative approach has tremendous benefits for evaluation in the public sector and for the individuals and entities involved. In particular, through participation, individuals and entities learn about the evaluand and the evaluation process. When the theory of change is discussed or reconstructed, participants understand the programme better. In addition, making choices about methods and design, data collection and analysis, as well as findings and reporting, provides participants with valuable skills that can be used in future evaluations.

3.4. Is UFE Appropriate for the Public Sector?

At the heart of the current research report was the applicability of UFE to the public sector, particularly in South Africa. According to the abovementioned critical analysis, while UFE remains a useful approach to enhancing the use of evaluations, its application to the public sector will require adaptation.

It has been demonstrated earlier that UFE has limitations; therefore, it may require adaptation for the public sector. Nevertheless, UFE is the most practical approach that can lead to the use of evaluations. However, to overcome the identified limitations, it must be adapted to suit the processes, protocols and practices of the public sector. This chapter has identified areas that require adaptation to arrive at an adapted model, which would be more appropriate for application in the public sector. Such an adapted model for the use of evaluations will be based on the following principles:

UFE should be formally adopted and institutionalised to ensure that its principles are carried out from the inception of an evaluation, as formal procedures and guidelines strongly delimit its application in the public sector context. Either the utilisation-focused evaluator will facilitate the process from inception, or the organisation will build capacity to plan and undertake evaluations in line with UFE principles. Once adopted, the following UFE principles (amongst others) will underpin common evaluation practice in public sector entities:

- Commissioners of the evaluation should be trained in the development ToR that will enhance use. For instance, the ToR must require evaluators to have interpersonal and facilitation skills, as these are central to UFE. It is pointless to assess evaluator competency in Step 6, when evaluators have already been appointed.
- The selection of PIUs must not be based solely on their position and responsibility but also other elements that may enhance the evaluation and its usage.

The 17 steps must be reduced to make the model easy and simple to follow/apply. A rationale will be provided for the removal of a step or the merging of a step with another. In this chapter, a case has already been made for reverting to the original 12 steps approach and reducing these steps to 10, by removing the steps involving metaevaluation, on the one hand, and evaluator competency assessment, on the other. However, an 11th step involving the theory of change would be introduced.

The use of evaluations should be regulated by means of a policy, regulation, or a practice note. This will enable oversight bodies to make public sector entities account for the way evaluations have been used. Key amongst these is the audit of performance information provided by the Auditor-General (AG) and the internal audit unit; management committees; the political head of an institution (members of the Executive Council or ministers); and even the relevant parliamentary committee.

The objectivity and independence of the evaluation should be protected by limiting the role of interested parties (PIUs) in the technical aspects of the evaluation, such as the choice of methodology and evaluation design; data gathering and analysis; and the finalisation of findings. Therefore, an appropriate model for the use of evaluations in the public sector must build in mechanisms to protect, prevent, or at worst, mitigate political interference.

3.5 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to review Patton's UFE and assess its appropriateness for the public sector. UFE has developed a great deal since Patton introduced the concept over 50 years ago. Today, it represents a potential integrated theory of evaluation use. It provides practical and useful ways to conduct an evaluation in a manner that will enhance its use. Nonetheless, UFE faces barriers and limitations that restrict its universal applicability.

In particular, UFE in its original form is not universally applicable: the 17 steps are laborious and complicated to follow; it requires a significant amount of time and resources to undertake; it is susceptible to political interference; the high turnover of PIUs or additional users identified as part of the evaluation process may compromise the approach; and not all evaluators have the required facilitation skills. In relation to the public sector, political interference is identified as one the biggest barriers to UFE. The structure of the public sector and the purpose for which evaluations are conducted creates an ongoing conflict of interests amongst key stakeholders. Furthermore, in the public sector, the evaluator does not have the latitude to choose or prioritise PIUs because they are often selected based on their position and area of responsibility. Similarly, the

evaluator often merely responds to ToR as published by commissioners and is generally prevented from negotiating certain terms of the evaluation, including who should be included in the process or who should have access to the evaluation findings for further implementation.

Nevertheless, UFE remains a useful framework to enhance the use of evaluations. However, given the identified limitations and gaps, the framework will require some changes when applying it to the public sector. At least four theoretical principles informing an adapted model have been identified in this chapter. Because the focus of the study was to develop an adapted model for use in the South African agricultural sector, it was imperative that UFE be explored specifically in relation to the South African public sector. This helped in the identification of context-specific elements that required amendment or strengthening in order to arrive at an adapted model. The next chapter examines the applicability of UFE to South African public sector.

CHAPTER 4

USE OF EVALUATION IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC SECTOR

4.1 Introduction

In Chapter 3, it was concluded that despite its limitations, UFE is the most practical approach that can lead to use of evaluations. Its significance is located in the following:

- (a) The amount of resources that the public sector spends on evaluation
- (b) The experience gained over its 50-year evolution into a practical guide to conducting evaluations in a manner that facilitates use
- (c) The benefits of its participatory and collaborative approach
- (d) The potential for individuals and the organisation to learn from it

For similar reasons, UFE is important to the South African public sector. The identified limitations do not render it useless or irrelevant but rather point to an opportunity to adapt the model in a manner that will make it relevant and useful in the South African context. It is for this reason that the research sought to develop an adapted model for the use of evaluations in the South African agricultural sector.

While not a mirror of the UFE, key tenets of the South African NEPF are influenced by or embedded in this approach (Podems, Goldman & Jacobs, 2014:74; Foster, Hartley & Leslie, 2017:64). Firstly, the NEPF is use-orientated in that it (a) requires a major upscaling of the use of evaluations; (b) aims to promote, facilitate and institutionalise the use of evaluation in government; and (c) emphasises the need to build the culture of the use of evaluations (DPME, 2011). Secondly, the NEPF expressly acknowledges the UFE approach. In particular, similar to UFE, the framework places the value of an evaluation on its use and calls for involvement of stakeholders (PIUs), who should use the evaluation results (DPME, 2011:3).

Furthermore, key to the evaluation standards developed by the DPME in 2014 was the intention to support the use of evaluations conducted through the national evaluation system by setting benchmarks of evaluation quality (DPME, 2014:2). In an attempt to encourage the utilisation of findings, the evaluation process is considered as a five-stage

process. Specifically, the standard envisages the early participation of relevant stakeholders (planning stage) by contributing to the evaluation design, identifying issues to be addressed and evaluation questions to be answered (DPME, 2014:6). In Stage 3 (implementation), consultation with stakeholders, including the clients of a programme, is envisaged. Most importantly, Stage 5 is dedicated to follow-up, use and learning. It envisages management responses to the findings as a follow-up mechanism; the dissemination of evaluation results to all relevant stakeholders; and reflection on the evaluation process to identify lessons learned (DPME, 2014).

These provisions are a demonstration of the extent to which the UFE approach has influenced the South African evaluation policy framework. They also create an opportunity for the introduction of an adapted UFE model that seeks to enhance use. This is an opportunity because such a model would not require drastic changes but would merely ensure that the approach is not just acknowledged in policy but is realised in the practice of evaluation in the South African public sector. Thus far, UFE is recognised in South Africa, and evaluation experts in the leading department (DPME) are conversant with the approach and in favour of its principles. Therefore, the key issue is how to make the UFE approach applicable to the South African public sector.

Whereas evaluator competency is presented as a limitation later in this chapter, a very important development in South Africa has created the requirement for a UFE type of evaluator. Firstly, there is substantive movement towards the professionalisation of the evaluation field, which is demonstrated by the commissioning of a feasibility study by the DPME (Beney, Mathe, Ntakumba, Basson, Naidu & Leslie, 2015:5). Secondly, the South African Evaluation Competency Framework of 2014 provides a firm basis for the development of evaluator competency (DPME, 2014). Amongst other requirements, the framework requires an evaluator to do the following:

- Act in a culturally sensitive manner
- Develop collaborative, cooperative and respectful relationships with the stakeholders involved in the evaluation

- Possess and apply facilitation, negotiation and conflict resolution skills
- Be able to advise on how to apply evaluation results

These requirements are similar to the competencies required in UFE. Therefore, while the competency framework does not say that the evaluator must be versed in the UFE approach, the skills required are relevant to those of the utilisation-focused evaluator. Again, the South African Evaluation Competency Framework of 2014 is another instrument enabling the application of an adapted UFE model. This development does not necessarily mean South Africa has a supply of evaluators with the prescribed competencies. However, it is a good basis for the development and use of such evaluators.

This UFE-orientated policy framework is indicative that the South African evaluation system has evolved significantly in the past decade. However, the practice of evaluations has not been undertaken in a manner that promotes the use of evaluations as rationalised in the literature and as espoused in the policy framework. This indicates an imperative for the development of an integrated model for the use of evaluations in the public sector focusing on the agricultural sector. In this respect, an adapted Patton's UFE has been identified as a framework that potentially provides such a model. Chapter 3 concluded with broad principles that must underpin an adapted UFE model based on the analysis of its applicability to the public sector in general. In this chapter, this exercise is taken further by placing it in the context of the South African public sector. This is line with two of objectives of this research, namely

- To investigate the potential value/relevance of the utilisation-focused evaluation model within the context of the South African agricultural sector
- To identify the barriers to use of evaluation in the South African public service focusing on the agricultural sector

In the first part of the following section, the evolution of the South African M&E system is examined based on three phases, namely 1994-2000; the Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation (GWM&E) system; and the NES. The objective of this section is not so

much to appraise the policy framework or practice of evaluation but rather to provide normative background how it evolved over time. The analysis and discussion of the challenges with the existing framework follow in Chapters 7 and 8. Based on the available literature, the second part of the following section reflects on the use and barriers to the use of evaluations in the South African public sector. The concluding part of the section assesses the applicability of UFE to the South African public sector and integrates the South African elements into the adapted model.

4.2 M&E in the South African Public Service

Since the advent of democracy in 1994, M&E in South Africa has developed from an ad hoc and uncoordinated activity to an institutionalised system that requires the evaluation of major government programmes. This evolution can be traced and presented in terms of three phases, namely (a) the transitional phase; (b) the GWM&E system; and (c) the NEPF

4.2.1 Transitional Phase (1994-2000)

At the height of apartheid in South Africa, programme evaluation was relatively unknown and social science research was used politically and selectively (Abrahams, 2015:2). Evaluation was practised primarily by non-government organisations (NGOs) largely to satisfy requirements for further donor funding (Abrahams, 2015:2; Mouton, 2010). The apartheid regime developed and implemented anti-democratic policies that entrenched discrimination and an organisational culture based on an ethos of non-transparency and non-participation (Presidency, 2014; Naidoo, 2012:304). Science councils were used as government research agencies that generated selective evidence to prove pre-determined outcomes (Dayal, 2016:2).

Accordingly, the end of apartheid and the introduction of democracy in 1994, necessitated transforming the public service to be democratic, inclusive and responsive (DPME, 2014b; Naidoo, 2012). The new public service had to be effective in contributing to the building of a developmental state that would address service delivery and developmental backlogs suffered by the majority black population. This process would require government to monitor progress in extending public services to the population regularly.

It is for this reason that the democratic dispensation embraced the notion of M&E within government (Naidoo, 2012:304). This phase can be described as the transitional phase covering the years 1994-2000. It was during this period that the M&E of government performance began to take shape.

At this stage, M&E was meant to (a) support democratic engagement by promoting transparency and accountability; (b) provide evidence for planning; and (c) support the developmental state (Naidoo, 2012:304). As early as 1995, the Department of Land Affairs established the first M&E directorate driven primarily by the need to monitor the land redistribution programme (Naidoo, 2012). During this period, evaluations were very limited within government and were confined to people who attended conferences outside the country (Naidoo, 2012).

Furthermore, although the basic building blocks were present as a result of government's strategic planning and budgeting systems, M&E systems were generally very underdeveloped and inadequate (Presidency, 2005:9). Nonetheless, departments had some level of M&E capacity in place; information technology (IT) systems were in the process of being developed or improved; and M&E strategies were generally poorly stated (Presidency, 2005). Essentially, this period was characterised by a non-integrated system for the M&E of public programmes (Cloete, 2006; Rabie, 2013).

As the budgeting system and legislation developed, National Treasury (NT) and the Office of the AG became the key institutions in the management of government performance information (Abrahams, 2012:03). In particular, the new legislative framework, the Public Finance Management Act of 1999, was used to regulate financial management in national government and provincial governments (Abrahams, 2012). The pursuit of cost-effective gathering of non-financial (performance) information and service delivery became a priority.

While the practice of M&E developed but remained haphazard, the turning point was the recommendation of a more comprehensive approach to M&E by the 1998 Presidential Review Commission (Presidency, 1998). It also resulted in the establishment of the Policy Coordination and Advisory Service (PCAS) in the Presidency (Dayal, 2016:2). This laid

the foundation for the second phase of the development of M&E in the South African public sector.

4.2.2 The Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation (GMW&E) System

The second phase can be traced to the early 2000s, which heralded an increased interest in M&E; government investigations into the state of M&E in the public service; and a strengthening of the role of M&E in the Presidency (Goldman, Engela, Akhalwaya, Gasa, Leon, Mohamed & Phillips, 2012:2). The 10-year review conducted by the newly established PCAS found that the “South African Government was weak in terms of systematically collecting and using evidence to develop policy and deliver services” (Dayal, 2016:2). Furthermore, the 15-year review conducted in 2004 called for the enhancement of M&E as part of its call for a developmental state (Latib, 2014:462). By 2005, the South African Cabinet approved the Presidency’s recommendation of “an implementation plan to develop a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system” (Engela and Ajam, 2010:02; Presidency, 2005:10). This paved the way for the development of the GWM&E system. It was envisaged that functions, such as M&E, evaluation, early warning, data verification, data collection, data analysis, and reporting, would be included in the system (Engela & Ajam, 2010:2).

Importantly, the report, which included lessons from a range of international experiences, recognised that the development of a GWM&E system is an ambitious task best tackled incrementally over a several years (Presidency, 2005:7). Accordingly, the implementation plan proposed a phased approach to the introduction of the system (Engela & Ajam, 2010:2; Phillips, Goldman, Gasa, Akhalwaya & Leon, 2014:293). The three main components of the approach were (a) programme performance information; (b) social, economic and demographic statistics; and (c) evaluations (Engela & Ajam, 2010:3). While the first two components were already in place, evaluations were to take place in later phase.

In the initial stage, the process emanating from Cabinet approval, in 2005, led to the development and approval of the GWM&E system for use across government in 2007 (Engela & Ajam, 2010:2; Phillips *et al.*, 2014). The aim of the system was to “provide an integrated, encompassing framework of M&E principles, practices and standards to be used throughout government, and function as an apex-level information system, which draws from the component systems in the framework to deliver useful M&E products for its users” (Presidency, 2007:5). It was conceptualised as a “system of systems” whose functional monitoring system would enable departments to extract the necessary information (Phillips *et al.*, 2014:393).

At a broad level, the goals of the GWM&E system were to do the following:

- Improve the quality of performance information and analysis at programme level within departments and municipalities (inputs, outputs and outcomes)
- Improve the M&E of outcomes and impact across the whole of government
- Improve the M&E of provincial outcomes and impact in relation to Provincial Growth and Development Plans
- Build capacity for M&E and foster a culture of governance and decision-making, which responds to M&E findings.

Three sources of data were identified in the GWM&E system. Performance information collected by government institutions and departments was the first source of data. These included output and outcome information that could be used for strategic and performance planning as well as budgeting in all spheres of government (Presidency, 2007:8). The second source was the social, economic and demographic data collected by Statistics South Africa (STATS SA), or certified as official statistics by this authority (Presidency, 2007:8). The third source of data for the GWM&E system was evaluations, which focused on the standards, processes and techniques of planning and conducting evaluations as well as communicating the results of evaluations of government programmes and policies (Presidency, 2007:9).

The use of M&E data or information was at the heart of the GWM&E system, as it adopted utilisation-orientated M&E as one of the principles (Presidency, 2007:3). Practically, the system envisaged that M&E strategies developed by sector departments would outline how M&E findings would inform strategic and operational planning/budgeting as well as in-year and annual performance reporting (Presidency, 2007:8). More specifically, the GWM&E document stated clearly that it was expected that data from institutional M&E would be used by other stakeholders to create an overall picture of national, provincial and local performance. In addition, a key requirement was that public organisations incorporated M&E capacity building initiatives in their skills development plans.

Key M&E activities during the second phase included the following:

- (a) The publication of a core set of development indicators grouped into 10 broad themes: economic growth and transformation; employment; poverty and inequality; household and community assets; health; education; social cohesion; safety and security; international relations; and good governance
- (b) The implementation of an information management system tracking progress on the priorities announced by the President during the annual State of the Nation Address, which were translated into what is known as the Programme of Action (POA)
- (c) Early warning about the functionality of departments based on 32 indicators used to assess the level of service delivery and review public opinion surveys (where applicable) (Engela & Ajam, 2010).

Advantages to the development of the GWM&ES were the interest and support from the highest office in government in the form of the Office of the President. Although the GWM&E system was developed through an interdepartmental task team initially led by the department of Public Service and Administration, the process was driven primarily by the Presidency (Engela & Ajam, 2010:02). The initial research and policy reviews were conducted by the Presidency; the recommendations for Cabinet approvals came from the Presidency; and when the process of developing the system stalled, the Presidency intervened and revived the project (Engela & Ajam, 2010). Effectively, the role of the

Presidency provided momentum and impetus to the development of the GWM&E process that laid a good foundation for the shift towards evaluations.

4.2.3 The National Evaluation System

The third phase, which began in 2009, can be described as the institutionalisation of M&E based on a paradigm shift after the general elections of 2009. The persistent and more pronounced socio-economic challenges, (poverty, inequality and unemployment, for example), compelled the government to reflect frankly on the challenges facing the country and concede to improving its performance through a focus on M&E (Goldman *et al.*, 2015:3; Phillips *et al.*, 2014). The establishment of the new Ministry of Monitoring and Evaluation in 2009 which was elevated to a Department of Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) in 2010 was a watershed moment and a shift in paradigm because for the first time, M&E was elevated to the executive level (policymaking) pointing to the seriousness with which the country viewed it (Engela & Ajam, 2010:13). The DPME was established primarily to drive the outcomes approach to planning through dynamic M&E across government, thereby improving service delivery performance (Phillips *et al.*, 2014:394; Latib, 2014:463; Dayal, 2016:2). This was followed by the establishment of units responsible for M&E by various government departments.

Against this backdrop, the South African government's approach to M&E became more pronounced through the introduction of policies and frameworks. Key was the introduction of the outcomes approach in 2009 through a discussion document (Green Paper) titled *Improving Government Performance Our Approach* (DPME, 2010). The outcomes approach basically entailed shifting the focus of government from implementation and the routine collection of performance data to paying attention to quality outcomes. Essentially, based on the priority areas in the election manifesto of the ruling party, the Medium-Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) developed a set of 12 outcomes (DPME, 2010:13). Central to the focus on outcomes was the requirement for the M&E of outcomes, which was expected to create the basis for accountability and learning through systematic assessments of what impacts and outcomes were achieved (DPME, 2010:10).

During the third phase of the evolution of the M&E system, a more focused and specific narrative on evaluation began. Instead of referring broadly to M&E, as if they were the same, there was recognition that evaluations are a separate and very important element of the bigger system. Accordingly, in 2011, government introduced the NEPF, while the DPME established an Evaluation and Research Unit (ERU) to operationalise the NES (Goldman, Deliwe, Taylor, Ishmail, Smith, Masangu, Adams, Wilson, Fraser, Griessel, Waller, Dumisa, Wyatt & Robertsen, 2019:1). The primary purpose of the NEPF is to establish an institutional framework for evaluations and provide guidance on the approach to be adopted when conducting evaluations (DPME, 2011:02). It seeks to ensure that sound evaluation evidence is used in planning; budgeting; organisational and performance improvement; policy review; and ongoing programme and project management (DPME, 2011).

The policy entails seven key elements:

- Periodic evaluation of all large or strategic programmes, or those of significant public interest
- Minimum standards for planning to ensure effective M&E
- Development of three-year and annual national and provincial evaluations
- All evaluations in the evaluation plan to be placed in the public domain, on departmental websites and the DPME website
- All evaluations to include recommendations and plans to address recommendations to be produced by departments
- DPME and the Offices of Premier to provide technical support and quality control for evaluations
- Appropriate training courses to be provided by the Public Administration Leadership and Management Academy (PALAMA) and universities to build evaluation capacity in the country.

The NEPF (2011) does not replace the GWM&E evaluation but rather enhances the element of evaluation by providing a broad framework. While in the past, some departments and entities conducted ad hoc evaluations, the NEPF streamlines this process by requiring departments to develop a three-year plan to evaluate strategic and important policies, programmes or projects (DPME, 2015:1). Therefore, with the NEPF, government has an approved three-year evaluation plan, which outlines the evaluations that will be undertaken during that period.

An audit undertaken by the DPME in 2011 managed to gather 83 evaluations conducted since 2006 (Phillips & Goldman, 2014). An internal quality review based on an internally developed quality assessment tool found that at least 13 of the studies were of poor quality. In the era of the NEPF, 71 evaluations on the national sphere of government have been undertaken, with 60 of them completed and tabled at Cabinet, along with two-year improvement plans (DPME, 2020:02). By 2015, only 11 (5 national and 6 provincial) of the post NES evaluations had been quality assessed, with most of them scoring above the quality threshold of three (Leslie, Moodley, Goldman, Jacob, Podems, Everett & Beney, 2015:4). Implementation and impact evaluations are the two most common types of evaluation conducted (Leslie *et al.*, 2015:6).

4.3 M&E (Policy) Framework

There is a plethora of legislation and policies that enable and guide M&E in the South African public sector. At the constitutional level, section 195 of the Constitution of 1996 requires a public administration that promotes the efficient, economic and effective use of resources and fosters transparency by providing the public with timely, accessible and accurate information. At a broad principle level, the Constitution provides the basis for measuring, reporting and accounting for the performance of the public sector. This is at the heart of M&E.

Legislatively, section 40 of the Public Finance Management Act of 1999 stipulates the reporting responsibilities of the accounting officers of a department, trading entity or a constitutional institution. In particular, the section requires accounting officers to keep a proper record of performance, submit it to oversight bodies at set times and subject it to

audit by the Auditor-General of South Africa (AGSA). This seeks to give impetus to the constitutional imperative to provide the public with timely, accessible and accurate information. At the heart of this section is the principle of accountability.

Based on an enabling constitutional and legislative agenda, the South African policies and frameworks for M&E have evolved tremendously over the past two decades. In the section above, the GWM&E system and the NEPF were introduced and discussed. However, there are a number of other key policy documents that inform M&E in the South African public sector. Part of the GWM&E process was the development of a policy framework, which resulted firstly in the approval of the 2007 GWM&E framework (Engela & Ajam, 2010:4). The three areas of work emanating from the GWM&E system were identified as programme performance information; social, economic and demographic statistics; and evaluations. In each of these areas, based on new and existing guidelines, practices or policies, there was some policy development to give impetus to related work (Engela & Ajam, 2010:4).

4.3.1 Framework for Managing Programme Performance Information (FMPPI)

A key policy development pertaining to the management and reporting of performance information was the introduction in 2007 of the National Treasury's Framework for Managing Programme Performance Information (FMPPI). The framework essentially, (a) delineates the importance of performance information in planning, budgeting and reporting; (b) defines key concepts in performance information, including an approach to developing indicators; and (c) outlines the role and responsibilities of individuals and institutions in the management of programme performance information (National Treasury, 2007:1; Engela & Ajam, 2010:10). Another important feature of the FMPPI is the setting out of the process of publishing programme performance information in order to enable oversight bodies and the public to hold departments accountable (National Treasury, 2007; Engela & Ajam, 2010:11).

Furthermore, the FMPPI clarifies the standards of performance information and supports regular audits of non-financial information where appropriate (National Treasury, 2007). It is this provision that enables the AGSA to audit performance information annually.

However, while the Public Audit Act of 2004 requires the AGSA to express an opinion on the reported performance information, thus far this has been limited to audit findings in the management and audit reports on shortcomings in policies, systems and procedures of government departments and agencies (Engela & Ajam, 2010:13; AGSA, 2013:9). Effectively, the audit focusses on compliance matters pertaining to existing policies. Because there is no policy or legislation enforcing the use of evaluations, the audit of performance information does not assist in this regard. For example, the AGSA audit does not assess whether the departments have used the findings of evaluations in their planning. Therefore, there is strong case for a strong regulatory framework to enforce the utilisation of evaluation findings. To strengthen the existing measures, the adapted model should include a regulatory requirement for the use of evaluations. This can be done by means of a policy, regulation, or a practice note. The regulation of the use of evaluations will enable oversight bodies, such as the AGSA and parliamentary portfolio committees, to hold departments accountable for the use of evaluations. In fact, the AGSA may include findings about the use of evaluations in the audit of performance information.

4.3.2 The South African Statistical Quality Assessment Framework (SASQAF)

In the second area of the work of the GMWM&E process, which pertained to economic, social and demographic statistics, the primary development was the introduction of the South African Statistical Quality Assessment Framework (SASQAF), in 2008, and again in 2010, when it was updated. Against the backdrop of the production of competing statistics produced by various institutions, such as market research companies, universities, government departments and public entities, it became necessary to assess and determine the quality of the produced statistics (SASQAF, 2010). This was particularly important for statistics in the public domain, which may be used for public policy or decision-making (SASQAF, 2010:1). Accordingly, the main purpose of SASQAF (2010) is to provide a flexible structure for the assessment of statistical products and improve the standard (quality) of administrative datasets (Engela & Ajam, 2010:11).

This is done primarily by providing “the framework and criteria used for evaluating and certifying statistics produced by government departments and other organs of state and, in some circumstances, by non-governmental institutions and organizations” (SASQAF, 2010:2). It provides for two categories of statistics, (a) national statistics, which are not certified by the Statistician-General (SG) but are used in the public domain; and (b) official statistics that have been certified by the SG as being official in terms of section 14(7)(a) of the Statistics Act (SASQAF, 2010:2).

At least three challenges in relation to the implementation of SASQAF (2010) can be identified:

- (a) The lack of a quality culture and buy-in from senior management
- (b) Insufficient communication between the developers of the system and the stakeholders
- (c) STATS SA has no dedicated team of quality experts appointed to be responsible for the training (Pistorius, 2010:01)

Given the time that has lapsed since the implementation and lack of research of SASQAF, its success has not been established. In particular, it would have been interesting to establish (a) the proportion of data in the public domain assessed through SASQAF; (b) whether SASQAF resulted in an improvement in the quality of administrative data; and (c) most importantly, whether such data is used in planning decision-making.

Such an assessment would be useful given the controversy and debates that some public statistics attract to this day. For instance, crime statistics are amongst the most highly anticipated statistics in South Africa, which engage the public’s attention. In 2019, a survey on victims of crime conducted by STATS SA pointed to a very high instance of housebreaking experienced by households at 969,567, while the official South African Police statistics reflected only 220,865 cases (BusinessTech, 2019).

Although, this significant contrast is attributed to the under reporting of housebreaking by households, the discrepancy is way too high and further made questionable by the STATS SA survey finding that at least 467,599 households had officially reported a

housebreaking (Mertens, 2019). This means that a significant number of cases that are reported by households to the police are not accounted for in the national crime statistics. This discrepancy and others discussed in the media question the collection, quality and reliability of the South African Police Service (SAPS) statistics. Most importantly, the question is which statistics are used in the planning of the fight against crime?

Missing in this whole debate about the accuracy of the crime statistics is the role of the SASQAF. It would be interesting to establish whether the crime statistics are assessed in accordance with SASQAF, especially against the backdrop of the STATS SA survey. Ten years since the 2nd edition of SASQAF, the reliability of statistics released regularly such as those for crime should not be so questionable, particularly as they are supposed to be used in planning and decision-making.

4.4 Structures Responsible for Monitoring and Evaluation

Although all government departments are responsible for M&E, there are departments and institutions that play a more direct and specific role in supporting the evaluation system. These can be categorised as (a) specialist function support; (b) oversight bodies; (c) training and capacity building institutions; and (d) professional bodies or associations.

The following institutions are responsible for specialist functions in supporting the M&E system:

- The DPME as the custodian of the NEPF, is responsible for overall government performance reporting and oversees/guides evaluations in the South African public sector through the development of policies and guidelines as well as oversight.
- The Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) ensures that the results of evaluations, which raise questions about the performance or the structure of the public service, are addressed.
- The Public Service Commission (PSC) reports directly to parliament and plays an independent role in the evaluation process. It is also a source of expertise in

helping to build the quality of evaluation and improving the performance of government.

- The National Treasury (NT) ensures that plans and budgets are informed by evidence, including that gained from evaluations, and undertakes cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit analyses, while ensuring that interventions are providing value for money.
- Statistics South Africa (STATS SA), which was established in terms of the Statistics Act (Act No.6 of 1999), is responsible for producing official statistics and is the custodian of the South African Statistics Quality Assessment Framework (SASQAF) 2010. The second terrain of data in the GWM&E system (social, economic, and demographic statistics) is primarily the responsibility of STATS SA.
- The Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (DCoG) is primarily responsible for the oversight of municipal performance and for providing support to this level of government (Engela & Ajam, 2010:12).
- Provincial Governments: The Office of the Premier champions evaluations in the province and ensure that evaluations are undertaken systematically across the province to improve performance and accountability (DPME, 2015:07).
- Municipalities: To keep track of how successful they are in improving service delivery, municipalities must design and implement comprehensive M&E systems.
- Public Entities: The National Evaluation Policy Framework 2011 is also applicable to public entities. This means that they also have to develop evaluation plans of their major programmes.

The evaluation system is also supported by institutions that are responsible for oversight in the public sector. These include the following:

- The Auditor-General of South Africa (AGSA) is an independent body that plays an important role by undertaking the audit of performance information, which assists with assuring the reliability of data.
- Parliament is mandated by section 55 of the Constitution of 1996 to provide mechanisms to ensure that executive organs of state in the national sphere of government are held accountable. The Public Service Commission reports directly to Parliament on its oversight of the public service.

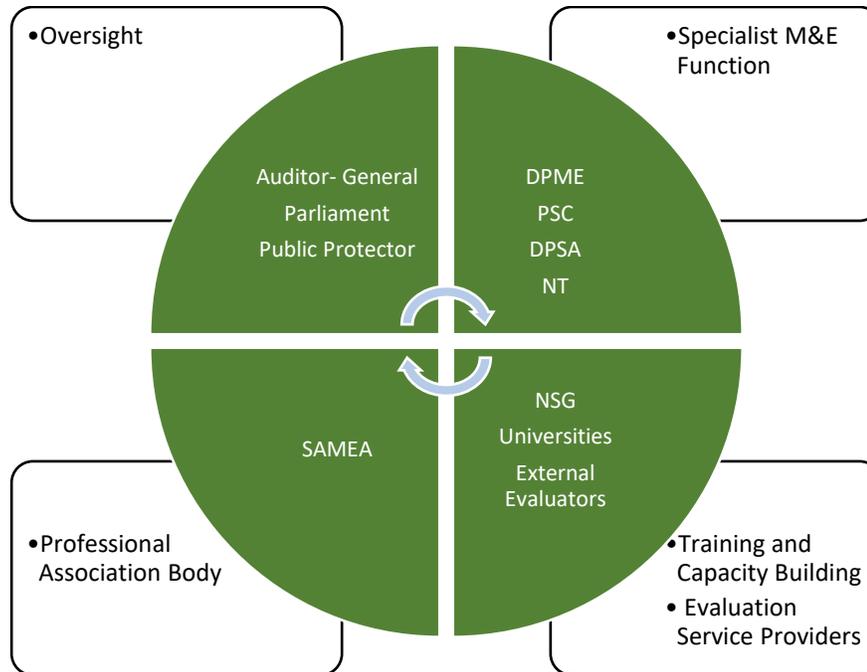
There are also institutions that support the evaluation system by providing training and capacity building:

- The National School of Government (NSG), previously known as PALAMA, is a state training institution, which seeks to build the capacity of the state by providing relevant training and capacity building programmes to public servants. It has a variety of introductory short courses in M&E. In many instances, it uses external service providers (consultants) to conduct the courses. The update and effect of these courses is not established. There is also a call for the role of the NSG in the M&E system to be strengthened (Goldman, Dumisa, Wyatt & Robertsen, 2017; Goldman *et al.*, 2019).
- A number of universities in South Africa offer short courses and formal qualifications in M&E. Through these courses the M&E skills base in the country has improved. In addition, universities conduct research, which generates more knowledge about M&E in the country.
- Independent service providers (external evaluators/consultants) conduct most of the evaluations in the public sector. The DPME has published on its website a panel of presumably credible evaluation service providers who are available for use across the public service.

The South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association (SAMEA) is the national association of people and organisations involved in M&E. Its primary mandate is “the

promotion and development of the practice of M&E in the public interest in South Africa” (Beney *et al.*, 2015:02). Through its biannual conference and annual workshops, SAMEA provides a platform for M&E practitioners to interact, learn, share information and build capacity. Figure 4.1 below presents a summary of the abovementioned institutions.

Figure 4.1: Institutions Supporting the Monitoring and Evaluation System in the Public Sector

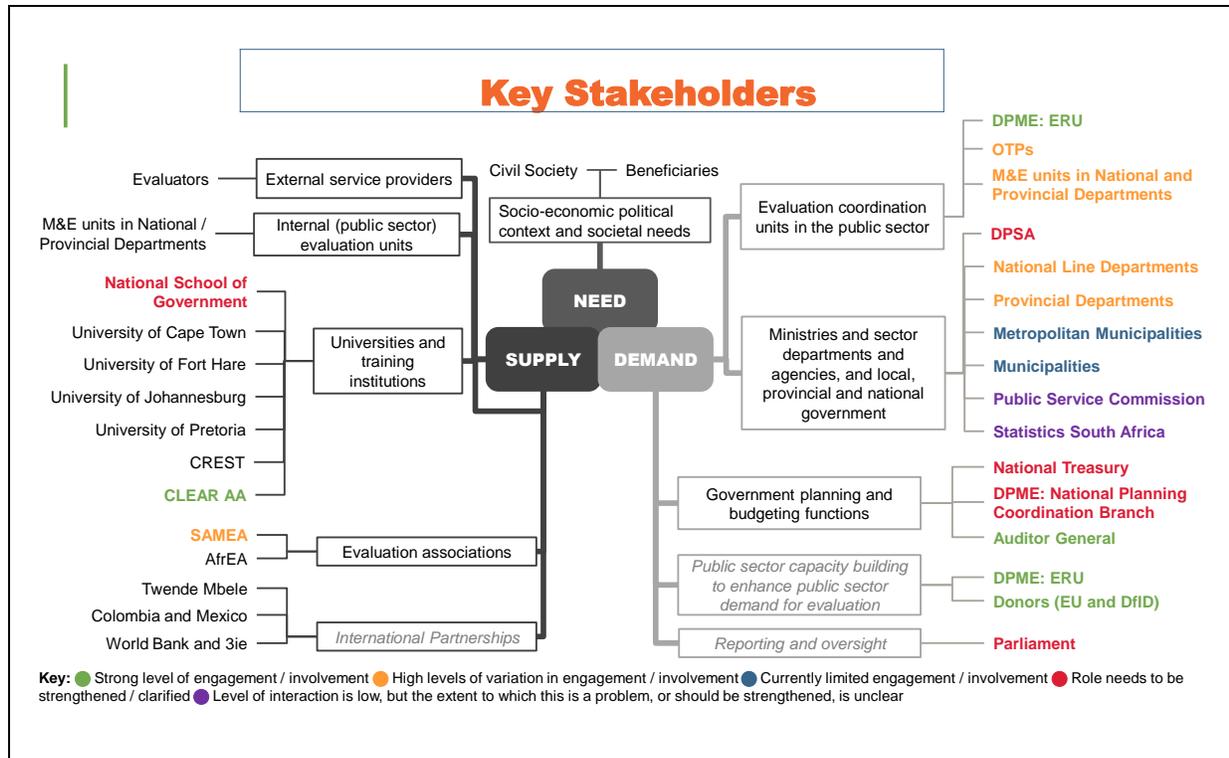


Source: Developed by researcher

4.5 M&E Stakeholders

The South African M&E system has a plethora of stakeholders. Figure 4.2 below depicts these stakeholders organised according to their role in the system.

Figure 4.2: South African M&E Stakeholders



Source: Goldman et al., 2017

Figure 4.2 above shows that the *need* for evaluations lies in a socio-economic political context and depends on societal needs, which are represented by civil society and beneficiaries of public goods (the public). The *demand* for evaluations emanates from government ministries and departments as well oversight bodies, such as Parliament and the AGSA. The *supply* of evaluations is ensured by universities, external service providers and internal M&E units. The diagram also shows the current level of engagement and highlights areas that require strengthening. Similarly, while the Public Service Commission was central in the earlier years of developing the GWM&E system, its role has diminished in the current establishment.

There are a few areas of concern with regard to the engagement of stakeholders in the M&E system. In the area of training and capacity building, it is concerning to see that the

engagement of the NSG still requires enhancement. Given the developing nature of M&E in South Africa and the skills deficit in this arena, particularly in the public service, the NSG should be playing a leading role in training and building a culture of evaluation. Secondly, oversight institutions, such as Parliament and the Public Service Commission, also appear not sufficiently engaged in the M&E system. This has implications for the use of evaluations because when these institutions are effectively engaged, they hold departments accountable for the information generated through evaluations, thereby leading to use. Furthermore, key institutions in the planning arena in the form of the NT and the planning branch of the DPME also appear to be inadequately engaged. The NT is key in ensuring that resource allocation (budgeting) is based on evidence (from evaluations and other research). Previously, NT was in a better position to engage departments and ensure accountability on performance monitoring and evaluation when it was still responsible for oversight over performance information using the Electronic Quarterly Performance Reporting System (EQPRS). However, in 2011 this function has since been shifted to DPME. While the NT can still ensure the use of evaluations in the budget process, their removal from performance monitoring may have weakened their position in ensuring accountability. The planning branch of the DPME is key in ensuring that government planning is rational and based on evidence too. If these two institutions are not sufficiently involved, the likelihood of evaluations being used is low.

4.6 Use Enablers

As the arena of evaluations is the focus of the current research, it is important to explore what the system has put in place to enable the use of evaluations. Admittedly, while there is no integrated framework for the use of evaluations in the South African public sector, a number of initiatives have been put in place to facilitate use.

The first enabler of use is the South African M&E policy framework, which is largely utilisation-orientated. In the section on the applicability of the UFE to the South African public sector, various policy provisions are outlined demonstrating the influence of and the orientation towards UFE. Amongst other acknowledgements, the DPME's analytical framework, which explores the institutionalisation of M&E, recognises use as a success indicator and one of the enabling conditions of evaluations (Goldman, Mathe, Jacob,

Hercules, Amisi, Buthelezi, Narsee, Ntakumba & Sadan, 2015:2). Hence, the NEPF appreciates the importance of evaluation use, for example, as “changing the compliance-based system that existed and ensure participation as well ownership of the evaluation by the custodian department” (Goldman *et al*, 2015:2).

Secondly, in order to facilitate use, the system also has a built-in mechanism, which requires improvement plans indicating that the departments involved have responded to the outcomes of an evaluation (Goldman *et al.*, 2015:3). An improvement plan is a typical example of instrumental use of an evaluation in that it is a department’s recorded response to the findings of an evaluation. Through it, the affected department indicates in writing what it is going to do to implement the recommendations of the evaluation. However, an improvement plan may not be the most reliable indicator of the use of an evaluation because departments may also simply develop and submit it for compliance. There is no monitoring of the implementation of the improvement plan. An assessment of implementation may show that the plan was never implemented. Therefore, by extension, the evaluation was not used. Nonetheless, the improvement plan is one of the primary initiatives to facilitate the use of evaluations in the South African public sector.

Thirdly, although discontinued, the Management Performance Assessment Tool (MPAT) introduced in 2012 was another initiative that encouraged departments to conduct and use evaluations. The MPAT was an “annual departmental assessment which measures management practices in Strategic Management, Governance and Accountability, Human Resources, and Financial Management” (DPME, 2016:03). Its fifth edition required departments to demonstrate that they had evaluation plans; that they had conducted an evaluation; that their management had discussed the evaluation; and that improvement plans had been developed (DPME, 2015b). This standard was expected to push departments not just to conduct evaluation but also to use them in planning and decision-making.

There is also a cluster of DPME-driven initiatives aimed primarily at improving the quality of evaluations in government. Indirectly, some of these initiatives may have a positive bearing on the use of evaluations. They include the following:

- A set of evaluation standards, building on international experience used by DPME in developing a quality assessment tool, which is applied to all evaluations once completed;
- Practical guidelines and templates on various components of the evaluation process that range from guidelines for developing evaluation, ToR for developing an improvement plan;
- A range of capacity building instruments and training; and
- Building a cross-government approach to take forward evaluation and to ensure that evaluations are used to inform plans and budgets, which has been identified as one of the roles of the DPME (Jitsing, 2013; Goldman *et al.*, 2015).

An important point to make here is that the importance of the use of evaluations in government is recognised (Cronin & Sadan, 2015). In addition, while there is no integrated framework for the use of evaluations, various direct and indirect measures have been implemented to facilitate use. The question of whether evaluations have been used or not will be considered in a later section.

4.7 Are Evaluations Used in South Africa?

Since the introduction of the NEPF in 2011, at least 60 evaluations in the national sphere were completed and tabled at Cabinet and 8 out of 9 Offices of the Premier have developed and approved Provincial Evaluation Plans. Moreover, a total of 61 Departmental Evaluation Plans (DEPs) were developed by departments in both national and provincial spheres of government (DPME, 2020:2). The agricultural sector, which was the focus of the research, had conducted at least 29 evaluations through the NES. While most of these evaluations were conducted at the national level, the Western Cape Department of Agriculture (WCDoA) conducted at least 7 evaluation studies, some of which do not form part of the NES repository. This is the most active department with regard to evaluations.

Although the introduction of the NES resulted in a general increase in research and publications on evaluations, the use of evaluations in South Africa has not been sufficiently researched. Based on the existing literature and government reports, this section considers the use of evaluations in South Africa by distinguishing between the use of evaluation before and after the introduction of the NES. Prior to the NES, sound evaluation evidence was rare or non-existent because very few evaluations were conducted (Cronin & Sadan, 2015:7). In contrast, the introduction of the NES led to an increase in the number of evaluations; improved capacity and quality of evaluations; and deliberate focus on the use of evaluations (Goldman *et al.*, 2015). The importance of the pre-NES period is that it provided a context for some of the pertinent issues that have arisen during the NES period.

4.7.1 Use of Evaluations Pre-NES

At least two important studies on the use of evaluations focusing on the pre-NES period were undertaken. The similarity of these studies is that they were exploratory surveys drawing heavily on the opinions of the respondents, rather than on substantive analysis of primary data. Inversely, while there are similarities to some of the findings, there is divergence on the key issue of whether evaluations were used or not. In affirmation, a study conducted by Jitsing (2013) on the use of evaluations results found that evaluations were used in various ways, including in the assessment of programme implementation and in the strategic planning process. In contrast, findings of an exploratory study of attitudes of senior government officials towards the use of evidence in decision-making by Cronin and Sadan (2015), pointed to a general culture and practice of not using evidence in policymaking. Furthermore, respondents indicated that when attempts were made to use evidence, it was not to inform policymaking reliably but rather to defend existing policy symbolically or secure funding from the NT (Cronin & Sadan, 2015:5).

While these studies differ on fundamental findings, there are areas where findings are either similar or complimentary. Similarly, these studies found the following:

- Government departments were commissioning evaluations and research in the pre-NES period, albeit in a less structured manner

- Where use occurred, it was primarily to assess programme implementation rather than for decision-making, with implementation evaluations being a frequently used type of evaluation
- There was no participation of external stakeholders in the evaluations
- There was a general appreciation amongst senior government officials of the need to use evidence (evaluation or research results) in decision-making.

While these studies do not answer the question of use in the era of the NEPF (2011), which is the cornerstone of the current research, they provide a sound basis for understanding the challenges of use in the era of the NES. Key amongst these is the culture and practice of not using evaluations or evidence in decision-making; systematic weaknesses in the policymaking process; limited time allocated to policy development; and the lack of capacity to manage evaluations (Cronin & Sadan, 2015). These points remain key to the development of an integrated model for the use of evaluations.

4.7.2 Use of Evaluation Post-NES

The introduction of the NES, in 2011, brought a sharp focus on evaluations in the public sector and resulted in some positive developments in their use for decision-making. In 2019, an evaluation of the NES was undertaken by the DPME focusing on use as one of the issues. The essential finding of the study was that there were positive indications of use and that the impact of the NES in decision-making was still a work-in-progress (Goldman *et al.*, 2019). On the positive side, it found that based on case studies, instrumental and process use appeared to be widespread; there were attempts by departments and provinces to use evaluations to inform decision-making; and at a national level, evaluations influenced budgets (Goldman *et al.*, 2019). In addition, the study found that the biggest unintended outcome of the NES was process use whereby participants reported that they had learned in various ways from participation in evaluations (Goldman *et al.*, 2019:8).

There is evidence that some of the evaluations had a significant influence on the programmes concerned (Goldman *et al.*, 2015:1). Examples include the following:

- As a result of the recommendation of an evaluation of nutrition interventions for children under 5, the MTSF 2014 included a target to drop stunting of children under 5 from 21 percent to 10 percent in five years
- Cabinet decided to introduce an integrated implementation strategy based on the results of a series of rural evaluations (land recapitalisation, the Comprehensive Rural Development Programme and land restitution)
- In 2015, Cabinet approved a revised Early Childhood Development (ECD) policy drawing from the results of the evaluation.
- In the Department of Trade and Industry, there was an evaluation of the Business Process Service (BPS) programme that resulted in a revised BPS launched by a minister in London in November 2014.
- In the Department of Human Settlements, Cabinet actually called for a proper evaluation to inform a new White Paper, which was also evidence of the appreciation of evaluation.

Apart from these instances, there are indications that evaluations are discussed at the highest level in the South African government. It is reported that the eight evaluations that were submitted to cabinet since March 2015, were discussed extensively, and their results were taken very seriously (Goldman *et al.*, 2015). However, the measure and meaning of the phrase “taken very seriously” is not clear, particularly when there is no decision or action to which to refer. Nonetheless, while it is unclear what decisions were made in relation to these eight evaluations, discussing them at executive level is an important indication of use.

Although these studies do not represent the majority of the evaluations conducted in the public sector, they give an indication that there was some level of use. However, the population of evaluations conducted was quite bigger than the listed examples, and determining the extent of use reliably would need more reliable data and comprehensive

study (Goldman *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, it is not possible to conclude based on the above examples that the evaluations were indeed used.

Furthermore, in 2016, the researcher investigated the instrumental use of selected evaluation in the South African Public Service by reviewing departmental planning, reporting and programme documents to ascertain whether use had been documented and conducted semi-structured interviews with relevant officials. The study focused on four evaluations that were conducted after the inception of the NEPF in 2011 and the quality assessment score of which was over 3.6. Only two of the selected evaluations were considered as having been used based on the results of the semi-structured interviews and the confirmation found in the documentation. While interviews confirmed use in the other two evaluations, there was no documented use in the departmental documents. In instances where interviewees confirmed use, they had to provide specific examples of changes that were made to the programme, of lessons learned or even of parts of the programme that could be justifiably kept. This element was accommodated with the understanding that using evaluation is not limited to documented proof and changes at the strategic policy level but may include learning lessons, changing attitudes, or even improvements at the implementation level.

4.7.3 Evidence of Non-Use

While there is some evidence of evaluations being used in the public sector, there is also a strong case that the uptake is inadequate based on government reports and the literature. Government reports pointing to non-use include the following:

- An evaluation conducted by the PSC found that the public sector produces a lot of good reports but that the impact of these reports to effect real change in public administration has been limited (Public Service Commission, 2014:3).
- An implementation/impact evaluation of the NES found that (a) evaluations are still not used significantly to support planning, policy-making and budgeting; (b) the improvement plan system has not contributed significantly in improving

evaluation use as envisaged; and (c) the role of different stakeholders, at different stages in the system, are not always clear. (DPME, 2020:10).

Similarly, Goldman *et al.* (2015:5) lament the delays by departments in producing and reporting on improvement plans and point out that some evaluations are proving more difficult to take forward, depending on the political dynamic of the sector. In addition, most evaluations in the database on the DPME website do not have improvement plans. In instances where improvement plans were developed, there was either slow progress in their implementation or departments failed to submit the six-monthly progress reports (Samuels, Taylor, Shepherd, Van der Berg, Jacob, Deliwe & Mabogoane, 2015:8; Goldman *et al.*, 2019). The failure to respond is blamed on the reporting burden faced by government departments (DPME, 2020). Given the centrality of improvement plans in measuring use, failure or delays in developing them begs the question whether there was any use.

Another issue that might indicate non-use is the lack of congruence between the main planning system (strategic plans and annual performance plans), the budget system and implementation systems, often in implementation programmes (Goldman *et al.*, 2015:6). While the evaluation of the NES concluded that national departments were using evaluations in budgeting, it also noted that a formal link with the planning and budget process was only just beginning (Goldman *et al.*, 2019:7). Furthermore, actual spending on implementation programmes across government is often not known (Goldman *et al.*, 2015:06). In many instances, decisions to change a policy or programme have financial implications. Therefore, the practicalisation of such changes needs to be aligned with the budgeting process. Misalignment between plans and budget means that the monitoring of improvement plans may show that other than documentation of decision, no implementation took place. Thus, the question is what is the substance of use?

In 2005, Umlaw and Chitepo (2015) conducted a study on the state and use of M&E systems in national and provincial departments. The study entailed an electronic-based survey questionnaire targeting officials responsible for M&E in all national and provincial departments. While exploring wide-ranging topics on M&E in government, very

enlightening findings were made about the barriers to the use of M&E information in decision-making. These include the following:

- Cultural barriers characterised by a lack of respect for evidence-based decisions, ignoring results and responsible officials not being asked to explain results that do not meet expectations.
- Sixty percent or more of departments without a dedicated budget for research or evaluations.
- The majority (61%) of departments are focused on activities and outputs rather than outcomes and impact.
- A third of the departments (33%) identified decisions being made under too much pressure as one of the key barriers to effective use of evidence (Umlaw & Chitepo, 2015).

These findings point to a culture and a system that are subject to serious constraints for the effective use of evaluations.

4.7.4 Point of Departure

There is no conclusive study on the use of evaluations in the South African public sector, and available research makes varied and contradictory findings on the subject. Therefore, the use of evaluations in the South African public sector still requires more in-depth investigation. Key to such an investigation is whether beyond a record of decision (improvement plan or Cabinet decision) there was any implementation. There is also the issue of whether the decision of Cabinet had anything to do with the evaluation or it was imminent anyway. For instance, in the case of the evaluation of nutrition interventions for children under five, Cabinet took a decision to adopt targets in the MTSF before the evaluation report was served before it (Goldman *et al.*, 2015:5). Therefore, it may be that the decision was not necessarily informed by the evaluation but was always on the agenda. In such an event, a decision cannot be accredited to the results of the evaluation, even its findings are aligned to the decision.

Nonetheless, what has been established thus far is that evaluations have become an important element of the work of government; some of them are discussed at the highest level of government (Cabinet); and there is evidence for selected evaluations having an effect on the evaluand (programme). However, there is still a need for a more comprehensive investigation into the use of evaluations in the public service, as the prevailing evidence is contradictory. Apart from investigating use, what is even more important is that there is definitely a need for a framework that will ensure that evaluations are used.

4.7.5 Factors Affecting Use in the South African Public Sector

Although evaluation use has not yet been investigated extensively in South Africa, there are indications of some factors that have affected use. They include but are not limited to the following:

- (a) The senior and programme management culture generally does not encompass evaluations as part of its routine work.
- (b) Inconsistency in undertaking evaluations by government points to a lack of institutionalisation (DPME, 2020:10). The practice and capacity for evaluations is uneven amongst government entities, with some being in the nascent stage while others are advanced; furthermore, a lack of institutionalisation is highlighted by the weak capacity of M&E units in government departments to initiate and support evaluations by contractors who provide evaluation service.
- (c) Poor quality programme plans have been developed without a clear theory of change (DPME, 2020:10). This is partly because departments are not planning for impact evaluations when programmes are designed. The implication is that theories of change and logical frameworks have to be developed retrospectively before undertaking an evaluation. The developed theory of change does not reflect the original intention of the programme because of programme staff turnover, or even simply a different understanding of what the programme initially aimed to address.

- (d) Departments take too long to take forward evaluation results, including reporting on improvement plans (DPME, 2020:10). Without improvement plans, it is difficult to measure whether findings and recommendations of an evaluation have been used.
- (e) Evaluations take too long: Time delays experienced in completing evaluations due to various issues, such as procurement processes, stakeholder availability and approval process, which make evaluations less relevant, and therefore less useful (DPME, 2020:10).
- (f) Poor participation of key personnel in the evaluation process due to most evaluations being undertaken by external service providers makes key programme staff, particularly senior managers hesitant to participate fully and to become active only once the evaluation report makes adverse findings about the programme (DPME 001 Transcript, 2021).

4.8 Relevance and Limitations of UFE to the South African Public Sector

The introductory section of this chapter discussed the relevance of UFE into the South African context. It has established that the South African M&E policy framework is significantly influenced by the UFE approach. However, there are certain limitations to the application of the UFE in its original form to this context. These include (a) the lack of an organisational evaluation culture; (a) the management of evaluations; (c) the way PIUs are selected; (d) evaluator competency; and (e) framework-related barriers.

4.8.1 Organisational Evaluation Culture

The first barrier to the application of the UFE approach in the South African public sector is a lack of organisational evaluation culture. Organisations with an evaluation culture are characterised by a commitment to using research and evaluation findings to inform decisions and by their ability to learn how to improve their implementation and management of programmes (Mayne, 2008:5; Steward, 2014:1). In contrast, organisations that do not have an evaluation culture (a) limit the use of results mainly to external reporting; (b) do not provide structured occasions for learning; (c) discourage

challenging and questioning the status quo; and (d) value following the rules rather than the importance of results (Mayne, 2008:5). The absence of an evaluation culture undermines any effort to build effective evaluation practices (Mayne, 2008).

The literature points to the fact that the South African public sector does not have an evaluation culture as defined above. In a survey conducted by the DPME with national and provincial departments, 40% of the respondents said that there was not a strong culture of M&E in their department (Phillips & Goldman, 2014:6). Two other studies also pointed to a general culture and practice of not using evidence in policymaking, or even showing a lack of respect for evidence-based decisions and ignoring results. Furthermore, responsible officials were not being asked to explain results that did not meet expectations (Cronin & Sadan, 2015; Umlaw & Chitepo, 2015).

The lack of an evaluation culture has been identified as one of the more serious barriers to the use of evaluations in the public sector. Introducing the UFE approach or any model in an organisation with no evaluation culture is likely to fail because such an organisation is effectively not ready. Therefore, central to the proposed integrated model for the use of evaluations in the South African public sector is the creation of an organisational evaluation culture. Specific activities that can be undertaken to do this are proposed under the preliminary model below.

4.8.2 Management of Evaluation

The second limitation to the application of the UFE approach is the way evaluations are planned and managed in the South African public sector. Firstly, the NEPF (2011) places the responsibility on the DPME to issue specific guidance notes and standard setting guidelines for evaluation. Key amongst these is the following: (a) the standardisation of the evaluation process; (b) the establishment of the Departmental Evaluation Working Group (DEWG); and (c) standardised ToR for different types of evaluation. These provisions have implications for the application of the UFE approach.

4.8.2.1 Standardisation of Evaluation Processes

The UFE approach envisages a situation where an evaluator works with PIUs in the entire evaluation value chain including deciding key evaluation questions and purpose; methodology; data collection; and findings (Patton, 2012; Reed, 1999). This means that the evaluator is key to the planning of an evaluation. As argued in Chapter 3, failure to plan the evaluation properly can lead to its collapse or non-use. In the context of UFE, the principles must be embedded from inception to ensure that the evaluation is planned and executed in a way that will result in use.

The South African public sector has a standardised process for undertaking evaluation, which all departments must follow. Key to this process is the establishment of the DEWG to oversee the evaluation system and support it across the department (DPME, 2015). This structure has far-reaching implications for the application of UFE because it is primarily responsible for the planning and management of evaluations in a department. In line with the NEPF (2011), this structure also develops departmental three-year evaluation plans. The implication is that key evaluation aspects of the evaluation are planned and decided by this internal structure before an evaluator is appointed. These include the decision about whether the programme is ready for evaluation; what type of evaluation is to be undertaken; and what key questions must be evaluation answer. To infuse UFE principles in the planning process, the adapted model must consider including an independent UFE expert in the DEWG or the steering committee to serve as a resource.

4.8.2.2 Standardized Terms of Reference

Furthermore, Step 11 of UFE envisages a process whereby the evaluator working with PIUs assesses and decides on the best methodological option (Patton, 2012). In contrast, the DPME (2016) Guideline 2.2.1 requires departments to outline detailed evaluation questions and the overall methodological approach in ToR of the evaluation. The ToR of an evaluation are decided by the DWEG or evaluation steering committee, with the input of the programme or project manager and the assistance of the M&E unit (DPME, 2015); (Jitsing, 2013:6). Once they have been approved, the evaluation is put out to tender and

potential evaluators bid to be commissioned for the evaluation based on the predetermined ToR. While the Guideline envisages the refinement of the methodology and questions to be elaborated in more detail during the inception phase, this does not provide an evaluator with sufficient space to change the purpose or key evaluation questions.

Furthermore, there is a likelihood that the DEWG does not have the requisite skills to ensure that evaluations are planned with a focus on use. In South Africa, strengthening M&E units to enable them to initiate and support evaluations and to convince senior management and programme managers to take the initiative to make evaluations part of their routine work is still a challenge (Goldman *et al.*, 2015). The success of an evaluation depends on not only the skill and experience of an evaluator but also on effective planning and collaboration between the evaluator during the evaluation process and active support of the use of findings after the evaluation (Rodgers, 2015:1). The participation of an independent UFE expert in the steering committee will assist in ensuring that UFE principles form the basis of the ToR.

4.8.3 Primary Intended Users

The UFE approach envisages that the evaluator will identify, organise and engage PIUs based on key principles (Patton, 2012; Ramirez & Broadhead, 2013). However, in the context of the South African public sector, the process works a bit differently. To contextualise the discussion, it is useful to look more closely at who the stakeholders are in the practice of evaluation in South Africa. Figure 5.2 above gave a broad overview of key M&E stakeholders in the South African public sector. However, it is still necessary to identify stakeholders in a more practical manner and answer the question: Who are the stakeholders in a typical South African public sector evaluation? Foster *et al.* (2017:66) identifies stakeholders in a typical South African public sector evaluation as follows:

- a) Policy-makers and programme designers
- b) Evaluation managers
- c) Programme implementers

- d) Evaluators
- e) Other external stakeholders (including civil society)
- f) Beneficiary/citizen representatives
- g) Beneficiaries/citizens

Theoretically, an evaluation steering committee comprising these stakeholders is supposed to be established to manage and oversee the evaluation from inception to the last stage (DPME, 2014). However, in practice, the steering committee is composed differently. Firstly, more often than not, this structure is heavily represented by government, and it rarely involves collaboration with the actual beneficiaries (Fraser & Rogers, 2017:73). Typically, the steering committee mostly comprises internal staff, such as such as a policy/planning unit, programme managers, a chief financial officer (CFO) and M&E staff (DPME, 2020:4). As argued in Chapter 3, this is not necessarily in congruence with the UFE approach. In particular, the PIUs are selected based on the positions they hold in the department rather than the criteria proposed by UFE, which excludes key PIUs who are external to the public service, such as beneficiaries or users of the service.

Secondly, there is a difference in the way primary stakeholders are identified and used. The South African policy framework uses the phrase “participation of relevant stakeholders”, while UFE mentions “primary intended users” of the evaluation. The term “stakeholders” can refer to a broad list of people and organisations involved or affected by the programme, but the term “primary intended users” implies a narrow list of strategic stakeholders who can make an evaluation useful. This is partly the reason that the South African policy framework results in stakeholders being selected based either on their position in the organisation conducting the evaluation or the one affected by the evaluation.

In contrast, the utilisation-focused evaluator uses a checklist for stakeholder identification and an analysis technique to identify PIUs (Patton, 2013; Bryson *et al.*, 2011). Such an identification is not just based on position in the hierarchy of the organisation but also on

certain criteria. People who are identified should be interested; knowledgeable; connected to an important stakeholder constituency; credible; teachable; committed and available for interaction throughout the evaluation process. Moreover, they should be decision-makers or influential, represent diverse perspectives and/or experiences; and have deep expertise in the area being studied (Patton, 2012; Bryson *et al.*, 2011:4; Ramirez & Brodhead, 2013:77; Preskill & Jones, 2009). However, in South Africa, the process works differently because the steering committee is appointed before an evaluator. The evaluator is potentially appointed or recommended by the steering committee, which serves effectively as the PIUs of the evaluation.

In practice, a study conducted by Fraser & Rogers (2017:70) found low levels of collaboration with key stakeholders external to government, in contrast to government role-players who are brought-in, participate and collaborate in the evaluation process. It also appears that the involvement of external stakeholders was limited to certain stages of the evaluation or only as a source of data (Fraser & Rogers, 2017). While the evaluation standards call for participation of all stakeholders, they have been critiqued for being vague about who should participate (Fraser & Rogers, 2017). For example, the standards refer to relevant stakeholders and clients of a programme but do not specify who these are. Hence, it is imperative that policy frameworks crystallise what constitutes good practice in the participation of stakeholders outside government (Fraser & Rogers, 2017:74).

Key to the adapted model would be clarity on the definition of PIUs; the process of identifying them; and creating a mechanism for the meaningful participation of externally based stakeholders (beneficiaries) in an evaluation.

4.8.4 Evaluator Competency

Evaluator competency, which refers to the set of skills and experience that the evaluator must possess in order to undertake sound evaluations, is critical to UFE. Hence, the second step is dedicated to assessing evaluator competence to undertake UFE (Patton, 2012). It is important to point out that the term “evaluation competency” refers to the standards of the evaluation, while the term “evaluator competency” refers to the ability of

the evaluator (Podems & Cloete, 2014:318). The latter is the focal point under discussion. Despite its importance, in many parts of the world, there is no generally accepted definition of what constitutes a competent evaluator or the professional body that certifies the competency of an evaluator (Podems & Cloete, 2014:318). In Chapter 3, it was emphasised that the requirement of additional skills by UFE in the context of a lack of agreed standards and even a shortage of evaluators complicates matters.

There is lack of evaluation skills in the South African public sector (government). This deficit was established by at least two surveys conducted by DPME. In 2012, a survey conducted with all national and provincial departments found that 32% of departments indicated that capacity for M&E is too weak and managers do not have the skills and understanding necessary to carry out their M&E functions (Phillips & Goldman, 2014). In another study by DPME on the capacity of human resources departments, approximately 72% of respondents said that they needed training in evaluation policy and practice (Phillips & Goldman, 2014). Although these studies were conducted more than 7 years ago, they point to a skills deficit.

Another indicator of the lack of capacity for evaluation is that public sector evaluations are conducted primarily by external service providers. It is reasonable to expect that if government departments had adequate evaluation skills, a sizeable number of evaluations would be undertaken internally. Given that most evaluations are undertaken by external service providers, it would also be useful to establish the level of capacity or competency outside of government. A policy brief by Twende Mbele (2019) points to “a real risk that supply may not be able to meet demand in the next few years, due to a projected rapid increase in government evaluations”. However, this relates more the number of evaluators available, rather than their competency to do the job.

Another important development is that the NPEF (2011) made provision for the establishment of a national panel of evaluators, possibly with standardised fee rates (DPME, 2011:18). It is not clear what criteria are used for an evaluator to make it to the national panel, but it can be reasonably assumed that some competencies must be met. While a national panel of evaluators is a good invention, it is not compulsory for

departments to appoint only the evaluators registered on the panel. This still leaves room for anybody to bid and be awarded an evaluation job.

It is recognised that various programmes are implemented to build evaluator competency, including the introduction of evaluation standards. However, there is a need to build utilisation-focused evaluator competency to ensure that there are sufficient evaluators for these types of evaluations. This can be addressed in part by the proposed institutionalisation of UFE, as mentioned in Chapter 3, the core purpose of which would be to build a UFE culture.

4.8.5 UFE Framework-Related Barriers

There are certain stages of the UFE approach that are not in congruence with the South African process of conducting evaluations and may prove difficult to implement. Some steps, such as assessing readiness and evaluator competency, are undertaken differently from the original UFE, while metaevaluation is not part of the process at all.

4.8.5.1. Assessing Readiness

The other limitation is that the evaluator, having been selected amongst several bidders, is not aware of whether or not the organisation is ready for an evaluation and plans to use its findings. It is possible after all, that during the assessment of readiness for UFE, the evaluator comes to the realisation that the programme or the department is not ready for an evaluation. While the evaluator may work with PIUs to create UFE readiness, the inhibiting issues may be so deep that the evaluator has no time or resources to intervene. Given the economic or business nature of evaluations, the likelihood is for the evaluation to be undertaken anyway, rather than for the evaluator to terminate the contract. This practice would be completely against the principles of UFE.

This makes it imperative that a model of use in the South African context starts with the preparation for the evaluation. It must be acknowledged that the first step of UFE is to assess organisational readiness for evaluation, including existing attitudes towards and behaviours related to evaluation use (Patton, 2012). However, given the dynamics of the public sector, it is necessary that this exercise be undertaken before an external evaluator

is contracted. Therefore, before the M&E unit puts the evaluation out for tender, it must have done some analysis of the organisation's readiness for evaluation and determined its attitude towards use. The point is, if readiness is assessed after contracting an evaluator, what happens when the evaluator concludes that the programme is not ready for an evaluation that will be used? They cannot simply walk away from a contract for which they bade and signed with the commissioning department. In fact, they have a legal obligation to deliver the evaluation as contracted. It is important to inculcate a culture of use and build the capacity of the M&E unit to plan an evaluation with a focus on use.

Against this backdrop, it is imperative to accommodate an internal assessment of the readiness of the organisation for the evaluation in the planning process. In this respect, a checklist of minimum standards to determine readiness can be formulated. Such standards will have to be satisfied before an evaluation is put out to tender and the services of an evaluator are sought.

4.8.5.2 Assessing Evaluator Competency

One of the steps dealt with during the planning phase is the assessment of evaluator readiness and competence to undertake a UFE. It has been established in Section 4.1.3 of this chapter that the South African Evaluation Competency Framework of 2014 provides for the appointment of an evaluator who has similar competencies as required by the UFE. It calls for a mix of evaluative skills, thematic knowledge and a suitable Previously Disadvantaged Individuals (PDI)/gender balance in the selection of the service provider (DPME, 2014:6). The evaluation planning process provides for an internal process (led by a DEWG or steering committee) of developing and approving the ToR for the evaluation (DPME, 2016).

Through this process, the steering committee establishes the criteria for a suitable evaluator informed by the competency framework. Effectively the suitability of the evaluator is determined during the planning phase, rather than as a standalone step in the evaluation process. In addition, the assessment of the evaluator's competency is conducted by the steering committee alone and not together with the evaluator as envisaged in UFE. Although the competency framework sets out skills that an evaluator

should possess, it would be important to determine the extent to which it is used to develop ToR or criteria for the appointment of an evaluator. Furthermore, the point raised in Chapter 3 regarding the competency of the steering committee to define and identify the utilisation-focused evaluator remains relevant. The committee must be knowledgeable enough about utilisation-focused evaluators to develop appropriate requirements and make an appointment.

In order to assist the steering committee with the development of appropriate ToR and with the selection process, it is proposed that the department appoint an independent expert utilisation-focused evaluator with no vested interest in serving as a technical resource. This expert will assist in ensuring the selection criteria and process results in the appointment of the utilisation-focused evaluator.

4.8.5.3 Evaluation Follow-Up

The UFE approach places a responsibility on the evaluator to follow-up with PIUs to facilitate use (Patton, 2012). It is proposed that the follow-up should be part of the contract of appointment of the evaluator to ensure that it is not done just as a matter of goodwill but as an obligation (Patton, 2012:281). However, the South African system does not make provision specifically for evaluators to make a follow-up. This means that the evaluator may make a follow-up just as matter of goodwill, which is contrary to principles of UFE.

Nonetheless, the South African system does make provision for follow-up as part of the internal government accountability processes. An example is the improvement plans (formal management responses) that must be produced by departments after an evaluation (DPME, 2014:14). The improvement plan outlines how the department will implement the recommendations of the evaluation. Once developed, it has to be tracked to ensure accountability for its implementation (DPME, 2014:14). It provides an important instrument for following up on an evaluation. However, the limitations of the improvement plan were discussed earlier, and it has been determined that departments have, at times, been slow in developing or reporting on them (Phillips *et al.*, 2015). Nonetheless, the

improvement plan is recognised as a method that facilitates follow-up and to some extent the use of an evaluation.

4.8.5.4 Metaevaluation

The last step in the UFE approach is the metaevaluation. In the context of UFE, the essential criterion for metaevaluation is whether the PIUs have used the evaluation in the intended ways (Patton, 2012:393). Therefore, it is essentially metaevaluation of use. Moreover, it must be understood as a separate evaluation altogether, which follows the same steps undertaken in the original evaluation. It requires the appointment of an independent evaluator other than the original evaluator, while the PIUs may remain the same (Patton, 2013:17). This is meant to strengthen the correctness of the primary evaluation process as well as the objectivity and relevance of the resultant findings (Seberova & Malcik, 2010).

Metaevaluation requires a budget, time and human resources. The main challenge is that evaluations themselves are not sufficiently budgeted for. While the NEPF requires departments to set aside one percent of the programme budget for evaluations, most programmes do not have this budget (DPME, 2011). For instance, it has been established that sixty percent or more of departments do not have a dedicated budget for research or evaluations (Umlaw & Chitepo, 2015). Given the limitations of budget for the original evaluation, funding for the metaevaluation is a challenge.

Moreover, there are time and human resource constraints. The composition of the evaluation steering committee is made up of high-ranking officials who occupy demanding positions. For instance, the CFO has a very demanding job overseeing the entire financial system of the department, as regulated by the Public Finance Management Act of 1999. The programme managers are responsible for the implementation of their programmes according to a departmental annual performance plan, which must be delivered by the end of the financial year. Adding metaevaluation to the process would require these officials and others to be involved in an evaluation for at least two years. It would be difficult to sustain their participation, and this may result in high turnover in the membership of the evaluation steering committee (PIUs).

Although conducting metaevaluation as envisaged by the UFE will be a challenge, the South African system has a built-in metaevaluation. In 2013, the DPME developed an evaluation quality assessment process (EQA) based on the standards for evaluation in government approved in 2014 (Goldman *et al.*, 2015:0; DPME, 2014:2). Unlike UFE metaevaluation, which is focused on use, the DPME process is focused primarily on assessing the quality of evaluation. Therefore, all completed evaluations are subjected to an assessment as a means of quality assurance (Goldman *et al.*, 2015:5). Each of the standards is scored using a five-point Likert scale rating of very poor (1), inadequate (2), adequate (3), good (4) and excellent (5) (Leslie *et al.*, 2015:3). Therefore, the quality assessment tool sets the minimum quality threshold at the score of 3 (Goldman *et al.*, 2015:05).

An important element of this assessment, which is based on the standards, is examining key use-related elements, such as (a) participation of relevant stakeholders; (b) independence of the evaluator; and (c) follow-up, use and learning (DPME, 2014). These provisions are not a replacement of metaevaluation as envisaged by UFE, but they provide a starting point for assessing quality and the use of an evaluation.

4.9 Point of Departure

An analysis of the practice of evaluations in the South African public sector confirms the broad principles or considerations that should underpin an adapted model for use of evaluations that were presented Chapter 3. These are further discernible in the findings of the empirical study presented in Chapter 7. In Chapter 8 both the principles identified in the literature review (2-4) and the findings of the empirical study are used to develop an adapted model to promote the use of evaluations in the agriculture sector.

4.10 Conclusion

In the past decade or so, the South African evaluation system has evolved tremendously. The introduction of the NEPF, in 2011, resulted in a systematic approach to evaluation in the public sector and an increase in the number of evaluations. While over 83 evaluations have been conducted since 2011, there is inconclusive evidence to suggest that they

have been used. However, there is no doubt about the necessity of measures to enhance the use of evaluations, including the development of an integrated model for effective use.

In this respect, apart from outlining the South African evaluation system, this chapter assessed the applicability of the UFE approach to the South African public sector. It explained that evaluation policy prescripts recognise the importance of the use of evaluation to the extent that they are embedded in UFE principles. However, the practice of evaluation is not undertaken strictly according to the UFE approach, and there are some barriers to the applicability of certain UFE steps, such as assessment of evaluator competency, follow-up and metaevaluation.

Nonetheless, the general influence of UFE principles on the practice of M&E in the South African public sector makes it conducive for an adapted UFE model. While the principles of the adapted model presented in Chapter 3 remain applicable, specific additions are as follows:

- (a) Merging of the reduced UFE steps in Chapter 3 into a five-phased approach to conducting an evaluation
- (b) Spending and planning of time and resources to determine organisational readiness before an evaluation
- (c) Appointment of an external expert to serve as a resource in the planning
- (d) Exclusion of steering committee members (PIUs) from data gathering, analysis and developing findings
- (e) Oversight audit by AGSA to enforce the use of evaluations

This chapter has focused on the applicability of the UFE approach to the South African public sector in general without concentrating on the agricultural sector, which was the centre of interest of the research. Thus, the ensuing chapters will focus specifically on the agricultural sector by looking at its evaluation practices, challenges, lessons learned and ways to improve the adapted model for evaluation use in this sector. Chapter 6 will specifically introduce and examine evaluations conducted in the agricultural sector.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

5.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research design and the methodology employed in the study. It starts with the description and rationale for the design, which was chosen for the study. This is followed by a detailed explanation of the methods used to collect data; the procedure used to undertake the study; and the data analysis method. The chapter also explains the criteria for the selection of the evaluation studies and the participants. It concludes with a discussion of the ethical principles that were followed during the research.

5.2 Research Design

A research design is a plan, blueprint, structure or an appropriate framework for a study (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:74; Jilcha, 2019:2; Leavy, 2017:8). It focuses on what type of study is planned and the kind of results expected from the research. While there are several research designs, the dominant types discussed in the literature are the qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods designs (Creswell, 2009:22; McMillan & Schumacger, 2006:22).

A qualitative design involves a generic methodological approach in social research, the primary motive of which is to gain an insider perspective on social action (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:270; Lapan, Quartaroli & Riemer, 2012:03). This design is followed by studies that seek to describe and understand human behaviour, rather than quantifying their results through statistical summary or analysis (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:270; Marczyk, DeMatteo & Festinger, 2005:17). Qualitative research is commonly characterised by inductive methods to generate knowledge that seek to create meaning (Leavy, 2017:9).

In contrast, a quantitative design tests objective theories by examining the connection between variables (Creswell, 2009:22). It entails the use of statistical or numerical data to obtain answers to the research question (Apuke, 2017:41; Marczyk *et al*, 2005:17). It

is also characterised by “deductive approaches to the research process aimed at proving, disproving, or lending credence to existing theories” (Leavy, 2017:9). Researchers following this design endeavor to remain independent of the subject of their study, with the aim of generalising findings (Lapan *et al.*, 2012:03)

Mixed methods research refers to the research approach that uses both qualitative and quantitative methods in the same study (Creswell, 2009:23; Leavy, 2017:9).

Table 5.1: Key Features of the Three Research Designs

Qualitative	Quantitative	Mixed Methods
Explores through in-depth analysis, or robustly investigates social phenomena	Tests objective theories by examining the relationship amongst variables	Combines or associates both qualitative and quantitative forms
Primarily focusses on words or text analysis	Based on statistical or numerical data analysis	
Uses inductive approach	Based on deductive approach	
Insider perspective on the phenomena (subjective)	Attempts to remain independent of the phenomena (objective)	

Source: Summarised from the literature

The choice of research design depends on the type of questions that must be answered by the research (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:74). In this respect, the key objectives of the current research were to gain an in-depth understanding of the barriers to the use of evaluations and to utilise this understanding to develop an adapted model that facilitates the use of evaluations in the South African agricultural sector. Achieving these objectives required a design that enabled an in-depth understanding of evaluation practice, context, policies, role players and relevant institutions in the South African public sector. Thus, the qualitative research design was adopted because it was relevant to and consistent with the objectives of the study.

5.2.1 Metatheoretical Traditions

It is also important to locate a research design in metatheories, also referred to as the philosophy or epistemology of science (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:20). The four most influential metatheories in social science are positivism; interpretivism or phenomenology; critical theory; and postmodernism/poststructuralism (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:12). The following table summarises these metatheories:

Table 5.2: Epistemological Perspectives

	Positivism	Interpretivism	Critical theory	Postmodernism
Purpose	Predict, control, generalise	Describe, understand, interpret	Change, emancipate, empower	Deconstruct, problematise, question, interrupt
Types	Experimental, survey, quasi experimental	Phenomenology, ethnography, hermeneutics, grounded theory, naturalistic and qualitative approaches	Neo-Marxist, feminism, participatory action research (PAR), critical race theory, critical ethnography	Postcolonialism, poststructuralism, postmodernism, queer theory
Reality	Objective external, out there	Multiple realities, context-bound	Multiple realities, situated in political, social, and cultural contexts	Questions assumption that there is a place where reality resides

Source: Merriam and Tisdell (2016:12)

While the intention is not to discuss the different epistemological perspectives comprehensively, it is useful to understand their key features as outlined in Table 2.2 above. The defining feature of these perspectives is their conceptualisation of reality. Positivism professes the existence of reality, which is observable, stable, measurable, and out there (external) (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:09; Schensul, 2012:76). Thus, researchers are observers and when gathering data, they should limit their interface with and influence on the research subject (Schensul, 2012:76).

In contrast, interpretivism assumes that reality is socially constructed, and there is no single, observable reality. Instead, there is a multiplicity of realities, or interpretations of a single event (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:09). Unlike a positivist researcher, an interpretivist seeks understanding and meaning by immersing him/herself when interacting with study participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:09). However, critical theory locates multiple realities in political, social and cultural contexts, while postmodernism questions the idea of reality residing in a particular place (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:12; Schensul, 2012:69).

These metatheoretical traditions are also associated with certain research designs. For instance, a qualitative design is linked to interpretivism or phenomenology; while a quantitative design is linked to positivism; and a participatory action research design relates to critical theory (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:49; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:8). A mixed-methods research design is linked to interpretivism and positivism (Schensul, 2012:77).

The current research was located in interpretivism because (a) it sought to understand the practice of using evaluation in the South African public sector; (b) it used a qualitative approach; and (c) it did not assume one reality (by considering multiple realities), thus recognising the importance of context.

5.3 Data Collection

Qualitative studies employ a pool of affiliated methods and techniques (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:270). These include data collection methods, such as participant observation, semi-structured interviews and the use of personal documents to construct life stories, and qualitative methods of data analysis, such as grounded theory-based analysis, analytic induction and narrative analysis (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:270; Schensul, 2012:69). These methods are meant to enable a researcher “to explore in detail social and organisational characteristics and individual behaviors and their meanings” (Schensul, 2012:69). A common feature of these methods is that they involve the “direct, face-to-face interaction of researchers with members of the study population” (Schensul, 2012:70).

The selection of data collection method depends on the question(s) that a study seeks to answer and the type of data required in answering such a question. A literature review and semi-structured interviews were the main methods of data collection in the current

study. The purpose of a literature review is to gain an understanding of the existing research and relevant debates and develop a “framework for establishing the importance of the study as well as a benchmark for comparing the results with other findings” (Creswell, 2009:41). Accordingly, the literature on (a) evaluation use and relevant theories; and (b) Patton’s utilisation–focused evaluation was identified through a search of library and web-based resources. The review of the literature on evaluation practice helped to ensure a conceptual understanding of evaluation; factors of use and non-use; ‘theories of use’; and Patton’s UFE model.

To understand the context of evaluation practice in the South African agricultural sector, library and web-based resources were used. These were supplemented by a review of the evaluations resource portal on the DPME website and a review of documents on the websites of the relevant departments. These sources provided key information about South Africa’s evaluation policy framework and evaluation practice.

The DPME repository of all evaluations conducted in government since 2011 was used to identify evaluation studies conducted in the agricultural sector. While most of the identified studies were found in this resource, there were also studies mentioned in the literature, or even listed in the repository of evaluations, but without the actual report and related documents. In this instance, email requisition was made to both the DPME and the relevant departments to access the evaluations.

Furthermore, to ensure that evaluations commissioned by provincial departments of agriculture were not missed, the provincial offices were contacted via email to ascertain whether they had evaluation studies that were not included in the DPME database. The email sent to all provincial departments of agriculture did the following:

- (a) Explained the purpose of the research
- (b) Requested a list of evaluation studies completed by their departments in the last five years
- (c) Asked the DPME to recommend one or two studies from the list that had offered important recommendations, which were implemented because of the evaluation study (thus providing a potentially good UFE case study).

Several email and telephonic follow-ups were made, but eventually, only two provinces (Western Cape and Gauteng) responded to this request. Through this process, 29 evaluation studies were identified.

To assess the use of the identified evaluations required an examination of departmental planning and reporting documents. Available departmental documents, such as annual reports, strategic plans, annual performance plans, evaluation improvement plans, and DPME quality assessment reports were examined. These documents were used to understand the programmes that had been evaluated; identify the findings and recommendations of the evaluation; and assess where there was documented evidence of use. The departmental documentation was sourced through Internet searches and email or telephonic requests.

The second data collection method used was semi-structured qualitative interviews whereby a researcher “conducts face-to-face interviews with participants, interviews participants by telephone, or engages in focus group interviews” (Creswell, 2009:168). These interviews involve (a) a few structured and a number of unstructured and generally open-ended questions; (b) making room for unanticipated issues that may arise during the interview; (c) follow-up of leads with neutral and probing questions where necessary; and (d) recording the interview (Creswell, 2009:168; Seidman, 1998:2; Weiss, 1998:154). Interviews are very common in social science research because they provide prospects for “mutual discovery, understanding, reflection, and explanation via a path that is organic, adaptive, and often energising” (Tracy, 2013:132).

Table 2.3 below presents a summary of the options in, as well as the advantages and limitations of, the two key qualitative data collection methods used in the current research, namely: interviews and document review.

Table 5.3: Qualitative Data Collection Methods

Data collection types	Options Within Types	Advantages of the Type	Limitations of the Type
Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face-to-face, one-on-one and in-person interview • Telephone – researcher interviews by phone • Focus group – researcher interviews participants in a group • E-mail (Internet) interview 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Useful when participants cannot be directly observed • Participants can provide historical information • Allows researcher control over the line of questioning • Provides information and background on issues that cannot be observed or efficiently accessed • Useful for acquiring information that is left out of formal documents or omitted from sanitised histories • Valuable for strengthening or complementing other data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides indirect information filtered through the views of interviewees • Provides information in the designated place rather than the natural field setting • Researcher’s presence may bias responses • Not all people are equally articulate and perceptive
Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public documents, such as minutes of meetings, or newspapers • Private documents, such as journals, diaries, or letters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable a researcher to obtain the language and words of participants. • Can be accessed at a time convenient to researcher – an unobstructive source of information • Represents data that are thoughtful in that participants have given attention to compiling them • As written evidence, it saves a researcher the time and expense of transcribing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not all people are equally articulate and perceptive. • May be protected information unavailable to public or private access • Requires the researchers to search out the information in hard-to-find places • Requires transcribing or optically scanning or entering the information on a computer • Material may be incomplete • The documents may not be authentic or accurate

Source: Tracy (2013)

According to Leavy (2017:45), there are three types of qualitative interviews:

- (1) Unstructured interviews whereby areas of interest are established by the researcher, but the discussion of issues is guided by the interviewee
- (2) Semi-structured interviews whereby the interviewer directs the interview more closely with predetermined questions that are flexible to allow the interviewee an opportunity to shape the flow of information
- (3) Structured interviews whereby the interviewer has control over the order of questions, all of which are predetermined

In the current research, semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect the empirical data. The benefit of semi-structured interviews is that by probing and clarifying responses, the researcher is provided with an opportunity to understand impressions and experiences comprehensively (Northwest Center for Public Health Practice, 2012). Typically, the conversational nature of a semi-structured interview means that the researcher can follow-up questions and guide the discussion in a manner that generates a maximum amount of information. In the context of the study, semi-structured interviews led to an in-depth understanding of the practice of evaluation in the agricultural sector.

The semi-structured interviews were undertaken and recorded through a virtual platform known as Microsoft Teams. Due to the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2019, people across the world have had to practice social distancing to prevent the spread of this deadly virus. This has far-reaching implications for social research methods that require face-to-face interaction with the participants in a study. However, as the world adapts, there is a growing reliance on online platforms that enable similar meetings to be held and recorded from the safety of our houses or offices.

The chosen methodology was consistent with those used by other studies of evaluation use. For instance, at least three methodological categories of studies conducted on evaluation use are identified by Cousins and Leithwood (1986). These are retrospective, longitudinal and simulation research designs. Retrospective studies focus on past evaluations whereby the primary source of data is the recollections or even the anecdotal versions of participants (Cousins & Leithwood, 1986:333). Longitudinal studies examine

the influence of data gathered prior to, during and/or after evaluation implementation. Lastly, simulation studies test the effects of evaluation use, or they anticipate it under strictly controlled conditions by using contrived evaluation reports (Cousins & Leithwood, 1986: 334).

The current study can be categorised as retrospective because it dealt with previous evaluations and derive data primarily from programme staff and documentation.

5.4 Sampling

According to Tracy (2013:134), sampling refers to how to choose sources for data specifically. Apart from choosing the people to be interviewed, sampling can also refer to “choosing specific locations, times of days, various events, and activities to observe in fieldwork” (Tracy, 2013:134). In the current research study, sampling entailed (a) selecting evaluations on which the study focused and (b) choosing the people to be interviewed to gather the required data. In qualitative studies, sampling is usually purposeful because it entails purposefully choosing data that fit the parameters of the project’s research questions, goals and purposes (Babbie & Mouton, 2011:28; Tracy, 2013:134).

Accordingly, in the current research study, the agricultural sector was purposefully selected, firstly, because of its high level of evaluation. Secondly, the evaluation studies on which the research focused involved a small population based on developed criteria. Thirdly, the choice of officials for the interviews was based on their location in particular positions and the nature of their experience. This meant that they could provide the data that was required to meet the objectives of the study. These procedures are explained in the section below.

5.4.1 Selection of Evaluation Studies

“The idea behind qualitative research is to purposefully select participants or sites (or documents or visual material) that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question” (Creswell, 2009:166). Consequently, the agricultural sector was selected as a focus of the research primarily because it was the most active sector

in evaluations, with at least 29 studies conducted since 2012. The data collection section has outlined how these studies were identified. A summary of these studies focusing on the type of evaluations and recommendations is presented in Chapter 6.

It was not feasible to conduct empirical research and analyses of all the 29 studies, as this may have compromised the depth of the overall analysis. A meaningful and useful engagement requires a sizeable set of studies. Furthermore, 21 of the evaluations were conducted by the provincial department of the Western Cape. Therefore, dealing with all the evaluations would have meant engaging predominantly with officials and their perspectives from the Western Cape. A balanced outcome requires a fair spread of studies across the two spheres of the government.

Accordingly, the following selection criteria for the evaluation studies were applied:

- (a) *The quality assessment score awarded* (threshold score of 3) by the DPME particularly for national departments
- (b) Evaluations that offered *clear recommendations for implementation* (particularly for the Western Cape)
- (c) *Timeframe*: The study needed to be no older than 10 years to ensure availability of respondents
- (d) *Mixture of national and provincial evaluations*: inclusion of evaluations conducted by both national departments and provincial departments
- (e) *Availability of evaluation reports*

The quality assessment score was the main determining criterion for evaluations conducted by national departments. While the quality assessment score does not necessarily mean improved use, it signifies that the evaluation has met certain standards making it worthy of consideration. Given the high number of evaluations conducted in the Western Cape that were not subjected to quality assessment by the DPME, a purposeful selection was made based on evaluations that offered clear recommendations for implementation that could be traced through a review of departmental documents and

interviews. Because the Gauteng provincial department had conducted only one evaluation, it was included to promote a balanced spread of studies and perspectives across national and provincial departments. Through applying the selection criteria, 10 evaluation studies were selected from the 29 identified studies for inclusion in the research.

Table 5.4 below presents the selected studies indicating the sphere of government (provincial or national), where the evaluation was conducted, and the quality assessment score received from the DPME. In the last column, an assessment score on use is also provided. This differs from the overall assessment quality score in that it focuses only on the standards that can potentially enhance use, such as (a) the presentation of the report to stakeholders; (b) the reflective process undertaken by the steering committee, (c) the symbolic use to the programme or policy; (d) the conceptual value of the study.

Table 5.4 Selected Evaluation Studies

Title	Date of completion	Sphere of government	Quality assessment score	Score on use
1. Diagnostic Evaluation of the Smallholder Farmer Sector	2016	National (DAFF)	3.80	4.08
2. Micro Agricultural Financial Institutions of South Africa (MAFISA) Impact Assessment	2016	National (DAFF)	3.80	
3. Implementation Evaluation of the Recapitalisation and Development Programme	2015	National (DRDLR)	4.10	3.87
4. Impact Evaluation of the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP)	2015	National (DAFF)	2.79	2.92
5. Implementation Evaluation of the Restitution Programme	2014	National (DRDLR)	3.84	3.86

6. Implementation Evaluation of the Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP): June 2009-June 2012	2013	National (DRDLR)	3.71	3.67
7. Evaluation of the LandCare Sub-Programme	2018	Provincial (Western Cape)	-	-
8. Impact Evaluation of the Food Security on Household Food Security in the Western Cape	2015	Provincial (Western Cape)	-	-
9. An Evaluation of the Market Access Programme	2014	Provincial (Western Cape)	3.46	3.60
10. Mid-Term Evaluation of the Siyazondla Homestead Food Gardens Programme	2012	Provincial (Gauteng)	3.34	3.89

Source: DPME

5.4.2 Selection of Interviewees

The key data collection question in qualitative research is “where is the interview data going to come from?” (Babbie & Mouton, 2011:288). According to (Babbie & Mouton, 2011:288), at least three issues are important in determining the sources of interview data:

- (a) *Enculturation*: interview people who have been involved with the programme or evaluations for a while (enculturated)
- (b) *Current involvement*: interview respondents who are currently involved in the issues about which the study is concerned

- (c) *Adequate time*: discard respondents who are too busy to be interviewed or obtain as much time from them as possible and request that they identify the next best person who can provide almost as much information

Guided by these principles, the selection of respondents for the semi-structured was as summarised in Table 2.5 below.

Table 5.5: Selection of Interviewees

Interviewee	Purpose of selection	Guiding Principle
DPME Officials	Establish an oversight perspective on the practice of evaluations in the selected departments	Enculturation and current involvement
M&E Officials	Establish internal evaluation processes, systems and challenges	Enculturation and current involvement
Programme Managers	Derive information specific to a selected evaluation on the experience and perspective of officials responsible for the evaluated programme	Adequate time
M&E Experts	Gain external insight on the practice of use of evaluations and what can be done to improve use	Enculturation and Current involvement

Source: Developed by researcher

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with programme managers (officials responsible for the evaluated programme) to establish their perspectives on the process, the use of the evaluation and the improvements that could be made to enhance use. Programme managers are often high-level officials and in the case of this study, some did not have adequate time to participate in this research. Therefore, when this happened, these managers were requested to identify another official who was equally immersed in the evaluated programme, and thus could provide similar information about the evaluation.

M&E officials in the selected departments were interviewed to establish their perspectives on the evaluation process; the capacity of the unit to manage evaluations; and how the evaluation was used. Moreover, they were asked to identify areas that could be improved in order to enhance evaluation use. These officials were selected based on their past and current involvement in evaluations (enculturation and current involvement). They were able to give an account of the process, challenges and key lessons of the selected evaluations that had been conducted.

Officials from the DPME, which is the custodian of the NES, were also interviewed to establish the oversight perspective on the practice of evaluations in the selected departments. The interviewees from the DPME were selected on the basis that they had been involved in the selected evaluation(s) and the programme for a while (enculturation).

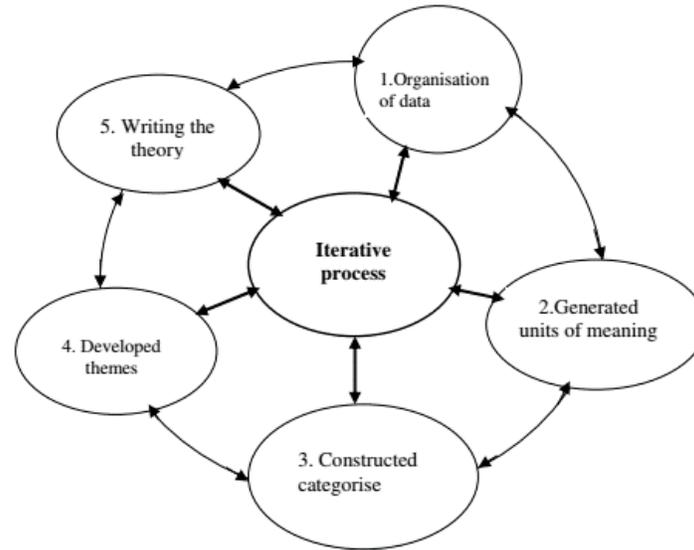
Similarly, interviews were conducted with M&E experts who were not based in government to provide outsider insight into the practice of evaluations in the selected departments or generally in government. These M&E experts were selected based on their past and present involvement with evaluation(s) in the public sector (enculturation and current involvement).

5.5 Data analysis

According to Tracy (2013:184), “qualitative data analysis is heavy stuff, giving your brain’s gray matter quite a workout”. Thus, the iterative approach used to analyse the collected data involved a complex process. This approach “alternates between emic, or emergent, readings of the data and etic use of existing models, explanations, or theories” (Tracy, 2013:184). It encourages reflection upon the active interests, current literature, granted priorities and various theories the researcher brings to the data (Tracy, 2013:184). According to a reflexive process, the researcher reflects on the data, links it to the emerging insights and progressively refines his/her focus and understanding (Kekeya, 2016:86; Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009:77).

In particular, the framework for analysing qualitative data using an iterative process, which was developed by Kekeya (2016), was used to guide the data analysis. Figure 2.1 below depicts this framework.

Figure 5.1: Iterative Framework for Analysing Qualitative Data



Source: Kekeya (2016:87)

Once all semi-structured interviews had been conducted, the first task was to organise the data. Participants were categorised in terms of the area of work that they represented such as programme managers, M&E officials, or evaluation experts. This was followed by the transcription of the interviews. Transcribing 20 interviews that had each lasted for 30 minutes on average, was a painstaking exercise, which took a lot of time.

The second step was to generate units of meaning from the “words, items, sentences, characters, themes ... meanings and symbols which are indicated in the text data by codes” (Sarantakos, 2005: 303). Moreover, to protect the anonymity of the interviewees, code names were allocated based on their area of work. These code names are described in Table 5.5 below.

Table 5.6: Participants Code Names

Code	Definition
EE	Evaluation Expert
DME	Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation official
NME	National Monitoring and Evaluation official
NPM	National Programme Manager
PME	Provincial Monitoring and Evaluation official
PPM	Provincial Programme Manager
SP	Service Provider

Source: Developed by researcher

In the third step, the data were categorised based on common responses to the key questions of the interviews. This process is defined as “unitizing data (that) are organized into categories that provide descriptive or inferential information about the context or setting from which the units were derived” (Lincoln & Guba; 1985: 204). With the aid of ATLAS.ti, the interview transcripts were reviewed several times to identify common or recurring ideas or responses to the key questions of the interviews. For example, all the responses to the questions about challenges to the use of evaluations were categorised as evaluation implementation factors or decision-making factors. This assisted in simplifying engagement with the voluminous amount of data from the interviews; comparison of responses; and determination of the dominant perspective.

The fourth step entailed the construction of the themes. Kekeya (2016:92) defines a theme as a “key or broad idea that pulls together the major categories and their characteristics”. The themes emerged from the categories that were developed in the third step. For instance, the categories of challenges to the use of evaluations (implementation and organisational factors) were linked together under the theme “evaluation use barriers”.

Based on the buildup of categories and their linkage to themes, the emerging theory was written. Essentially, the theory answered the following questions: What are the factors that affect the use of evaluations? What can be done to promote the use of evaluations in the South African agricultural sector? In the concluding chapter of this dissertation, this theory is presented as the adapted model to promote the effective use of evaluations in the agricultural sector.

5.5.1. Data Analysis Tool

The analysis of the interview data was aided by the computer-aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) package known as ATLAS.ti4 (version 7). According to Wildschut (2014:27), because Atlas.ti enables efficient text and graphic analysis, it is a useful tool for reviewing qualitative data. This programme was used with the full appreciation that like other CAQDAS, it is not designed to do the analysis for the researcher but rather to facilitate data analysis (Babbie & Mouton, 2011:503). It was used to code, categorise and draw themes from the data, which made the analysis of the voluminous transcripts simpler and more structured.

5.6 Limitations

The following are identified as the limitations of the study:

(a) Availability of Programme Managers

Most programme managers are senior government officials (Deputy Director-Generals). Given their busy schedules, it was difficult and in some cases, not possible to secure their participation in the semi-structured interviews. However, this limitation was mitigated by

their substitution with another official in the programme, who was able to participate and had sufficient knowledge of the evaluation that had been conducted.

(b) Turnover of Officials

Some of the identified evaluations had been conducted about a decade previously. Therefore, since their implementation, some officials had left the departments or the programme. Fortunately, most of the officials that had left were still in the M&E sector and could be traced. For example, the former Director of M&E at the Department of Land Reform and Rural Development had left and joined the DPME. Therefore, it was still possible to tap into her insight regarding the evaluation practice of her former department.

Similarly, the core of the officials that had established the NES and managed evaluations at the DPME had left this department. However, because these officials were M&E consultants or teaching M&E at Universities, they could be traced, and thus participated in the study. Their participation was crucial in that they provided perspectives from both government and external experts.

(c) Participants' Memory

Another limitation was that even when respondents were available, at times they did not have a clear recollection of the process. They struggled to recall certain details about the way the evaluation that had been conducted. For example, SP002 Transcript (2021), who was the evaluator for one of the programmes, could not recall whether programme managers had participated or not.

(d) Number of Provinces

Only two of the nine provinces had conducted evaluations. This robbed the study of the opportunity to learn about the use of evaluations in most provinces, which partly limited the possibility of the findings being from a sectoral perspective.

(e) Generalisability of the study

Since this study is limited to the agriculture sector, it means that its results cannot be generalised. Furthermore, the non-participation of most provinces in the study; and the exclusion of local government and public entities also affects its generalisability in the sector.

5.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethics pertains to “doing good and avoiding harm” (Orb, Eisenhauer & Wynaden, 2000:93). Ethical issues are pertinent in any kind of research or scientific practice (Orb, *et al.*, 2000:93; Costa, 2013:21). In particular, all studies that involve people contain some level of risk that ranges from “minor discomfort or embarrassment caused by somewhat intrusive or provocative questions to much more severe effects on participants’ physical or emotional well-being” (Marczyk *et al.*, 2005:233). However, the nature of ethical problems in qualitative research studies is unique because during the research process, the in-depth interaction between researchers and individuals/communities creates a fertile ground for the emergence of ethical dilemmas (Orb *et al.*, 2000:93; Mertens, 2012:19). At the center of this interaction is the power relationship between researchers and participants, as well as other ethical issues that derive from interactions with people (Orb *et al.*, 2000:93).

Ethical problems necessitate the application of appropriate ethics principles to prevent, reduce or avoid harm (Orb *et al.*, 2000:93). It is on this basis that the ethical issues that might have arisen in the current research were addressed in the following ways:

- Ethical clearance was obtained from the faculty research ethics board;
- Permission was sought and granted by the heads of institutions (gate keepers) and the participants;
- The research was conducted in an ethical manner, and the interviews were conducted with the utmost honesty and with no harm to the participant in any way;
- The respondents were guaranteed anonymity and discretion at all times; and

- Confidentiality agreements were entered into with the departments from whom data were collected.

5.8 Conclusion

The design and methodology of the research study was extensively outlined and discussed in this chapter. In line with the study's objective of gaining an in-depth understanding of the barriers and systems that enhance the use of evaluations, a qualitative approach was employed. Epistemologically the study was located in interpretivism primarily because it did not assume one reality but rather acknowledged the existence of multiple realities and recognised the importance of context. The purpose of the study was exploratory, as it was conducted to explore and provide basic familiarity with the use of evaluations in the South African public sector.

Data were collected through a review of departmental and programme documents as well as semi-structured interviews with programme managers, M&E officials and evaluation experts. Based on selection criteria developed by the researcher, the number of evaluations was reduced from 29 to 10 to enable meaningful and in-depth analysis. A total of 20 participants were interviewed using the Microsoft Teams online platform that also allowed for audio recording. Data were analysed according to the five-step framework for analysing qualitative data using an iterative process, which was developed by Kekeya (2016).

CHAPTER 6

EVALUATION PRACTICE IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

6.1 Introduction

The essence of Chapter 4 was to assess the applicability of the UFE approach to the broader South African public sector by examining the evolution, policy frameworks and the practice of evaluation. While it was concluded that the South African evaluation system is influenced largely by the principles of the UFE approach, there were key areas that required adaptation, resulting in further changes to the preliminary adapted model for the use of evaluations. Having explored the UFE approach broadly and, more specifically, its applicability to the South African public sector, it is now opportune to introduce its applicability to the agricultural sector, which is the sector of focus in the current research.

The main aim of the research was to develop a model for the use of evaluations in the agricultural sector². Accordingly, this chapter provides a broad overview of the South African agricultural sector and explores its practice of evaluations, focusing on its structural organisation and the types of evaluations conducted. This is linked to at least two objectives of the study, namely (a) to identify the barriers to the use of evaluation in the South African public service focusing on the agricultural sector; and (b) to develop an adapted model that facilitates the use of evaluations in the South African agricultural sector.

6.2 South African Agricultural Sector

The structure of the South African agricultural sector owes much to the socio-political history of the country. In particular, the Land Acts of 1913 and 1936, along with allied legislation such as the Black Administration Act of 1927, “resulted in a skewed pattern of land ownership and forms of tenure, whose purpose was to protect white commercial

² It is important to qualify that the term “agricultural sector” is used here to refer to all government departments at both national and provincial level that have a mandate on agriculture, land reform and rural development. Specifically, the sector includes the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD), which is a national department, and provincial departments of agriculture

farmers against competition from black farmers” (Kirsten, 2006:1). These policies and other discriminatory policies of the apartheid government resulted in extreme inequalities in relation to land ownership and land use (Kloppers & Pienaar, 2014). By the dawn of democracy in 1994, at least 87% of the land was in the hands of the minority white population, while 13% made up the Bantustans (Nkomo, 2018).

Despite the ambitious post-democratic government’s intention to change land ownership patterns by redistributing 30% of the land by 2014, South Africa's agricultural sector is still characterised by a dual economy, comprising well-developed commercial farming, with established supply chains, and small-scale subsistence-based farming (New Agriculturist, 2021). This is the outcome of the discriminatory policies that divided the nation into a relatively prosperous white heartland and a cluster of increasingly impoverished black reserves on the periphery and within cities (Nkomo, 2018). Today most farmers (approximately 2.7 million) are engaged in subsistence agriculture (New Agriculturist, 2021).

South Africa can be divided into distinct farming regions, and farming activities range from intensive crop production in winter rainfall and high summer rainfall areas, to cattle ranching in the bushveld and sheep farming in the more arid regions (Goldblatt, 2018:2). However, most of the country’s land (69%) is suitable for grazing, and thus livestock farming is its largest agricultural sector (New Agriculturist, 2021; Goldblatt, 2018). Only 12% of the land is considered suitable for the production of rain-fed crops (Goldblatt, 2018).

Despite the discriminatory history and the sensitivity of the topic of land ownership, agriculture is a very important and strategic sector in the development and transformation of South Africa. This is demonstrated by the constitutional and policy prescripts on agriculture since the advent of democracy in the country. The 1995 White Paper on Agriculture emphasised the key role of agriculture in economic development when it stated that the mission of the sector was to do the following:

Ensure equitable access to agriculture and promote the contribution of agriculture to the development of all communities, society at large and the national economy, in order

to enhance income, food security, employment and quality of life in a sustainable manner.

This vision recognised the important role that agriculture can play in economic development, the creation of jobs, poverty reduction and ensuring food security.

Similarly, when the Constitution was drafted in 1996, it elevated access to food, a key function of agriculture, into a right. Section 27(1)(b) provides that everyone has the right to access sufficient food and water. Furthermore, section 27(2) of the Constitution mandates the state to “take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to achieve progressive realization of these rights”.

Most recently, the importance of agriculture was amplified by its projection in the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030. The NDP (2011:197) identifies agriculture as the primary economic activity in the rural areas, which can potentially create over one million jobs by 2030 and improve the livelihoods of rural communities. These policy and constitutional prescripts highlight that agriculture is a key sector in the development agenda of South Africa.

6.2.1 Contribution of Agriculture to the Economy

The importance of the agricultural sector is also demonstrated by its contribution to the national economy. Agriculture has been the bedrock of the South African economy for decades. This is demonstrated by its share of gross domestic product (GDP), the number of people it employs, the proportion of foreign exchange it attracts, its supply of the bulk of basic food and the subsistence as well as other income it provides to the population (FAO, 2002:7).

While the national economy contracted by 7.2% in 2020, as shown in Figure 6.2 below, the agricultural sector was the only one that recorded a growth (11.3%). This growth was driven by recoveries in horticulture as well as grain and livestock farming (National Treasury, 2021:25).

Table 6.1: South African Economic Sector Performance

Sector performance						
Percentage change	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020 ¹
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	-5.9	-10.1	21.1	-4.8	-6.9	11.3
Mining and quarrying	3.3	-3.9	4.2	-1.7	-1.9	-13.8
Manufacturing	-0.4	0.8	-0.2	1.0	-0.8	-14.9
Electricity, gas and water	-1.9	-2.1	0.6	0.9	-2.0	-6.5
Construction	1.8	1.2	-0.6	-1.2	-3.3	-20.0
Trade, catering and accommodation	2.1	1.7	-0.3	0.6	–	-10.7
Transport, storage and communication	1.4	1.1	1.4	1.6	-0.4	-15.6
Finance, real estate and business services	2.1	1.9	2.1	1.8	2.3	-3.4
General government services	0.8	0.6	0.3	1.3	1.7	0.8
Personal services	0.9	1.8	1.3	1.0	1.0	-3.4
Gross domestic product	1.2	0.4	1.4	0.8	0.2	-7.9

Source: National Treasury, 2020

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating effect on many economies across the world. There have been trade disruptions because of global lockdowns, as authorities try to stop the spread of the virus. However, despite this, recent economic statistics released by STATS SA showed that the agricultural sector experienced growth during the last quarter of 2020, which was not the case with other sectors. This means that agriculture continues to be the redeeming feature of the South African economy, even in trying times of economic contraction and the COVID-19 pandemic (Mkhabela, 2020).

The other importance of the agricultural sector is its contribution to the creation of jobs. Despite its dwindling contribution to the GDP, the sector makes a significant contribution to employment, with at least 843 000 people employed in the sector during the second quarter of 2018 (STATS SA, 2018:2; New Agriculturist, 2021). In fact, the NDP (2010: 219) estimates that agriculture can create at least one million jobs by 2030.

However, South Africa is besieged by a subdued economic trajectory; and historically high levels of inequality; poverty and unemployment; and household food insecurity. However, the NT projects a real economic growth of 3.3% in 2021, from a low base of at least -7.2% in 2020. This positive projection is based on additional policy stimulus and expectations that the massive vaccination programme in the country will turn the tide against the pandemic and create space for increased economic activity. However, the

impact of the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns and restrictions on some sectors of the economy has resulted in a high unemployment rate of 32.6% in the first three quarters of 2021 (STATS SA, 2021). In the same breath, poverty remains a pressing challenge in the country. Extreme poverty (officially measured as those living below the food poverty line) affects 20.2% of the population (10, 2 million people) (STATS SA, 2014:12).

Key to the mandate of the agricultural sector is the objective to address the issue of household food security. The NDP stresses the relationship between poverty, unemployment and food insecurity. It describes food insecurity as both a cause and a consequence of poverty. In this respect, an estimated 21.3% of households in South Africa had inadequate or severely inadequate access to food in 2017 (STATS SA, 2019).

Furthermore, the country faces the challenges of a racially uneven ownership of land due to colonialism and apartheid. The Land Audit Report of 2017 found that Whites still owned around 72% of the farms owned by individuals; Coloured 15%; Indians 5%; and Blacks, (who constitute the majority of the population) owned only 4%. These challenges have persisted despite the advent of the democratic order in 1994.

6.2.2 Governance of the Agricultural Sector

In terms of schedule 4 of the Constitution of South Africa (1996), agriculture is a concurrent function of the national and provincial spheres of government. The national sphere determines policy and priorities for the sector, while provincial departments implement programmes and projects. At the national sphere, the agricultural department has been given other mandates over time, such as forestry, fisheries and environment. During the electoral cycle of 2004-2014, there were two national departments that were responsible for the agricultural sector. These were the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) and the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLS). The main mandate of the DAFF was agriculture-related activities, such as increased productivity of the sector, food security, contribution to job creation and rural development (DAFF, 2011). However, the mandate of the DRDLR was “to create and maintain an equitable and sustainable land dispensation; and acting as a coordinator and catalyst in rural development to ensure sustainable rural livelihoods, decent work and

continued social and economic advancement of all South Africans” (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2019).

There were strong commonalities in these two departments. For instance, both departments derived their constitutional mandates from sections 24, 25 and 27 of the Constitution, which relates to sustainable development and the use of natural resources, redress of racially based property relations and access to sufficient food and water. At the strategic and operational level, the acquisition and distribution of land, which was primarily agricultural, was the function of the DAFF. In addition, both departments operated in the rural space; hence, both had a mandate for rural development. Against this backdrop, during the reconfiguration of departments in 2019, the two departments were merged to form the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD).

However, at provincial level, departments with a mandate for agriculture have continued to be organised in a differentiated manner. Prior to the national and provincial elections of 2019, at least seven provinces had departments of agriculture and rural development, while two provinces had paired the mandate of agriculture with that of environmental affairs. Currently five provinces have a Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, while two have included land reform and environmental affairs in their mandates. The Eastern Cape has embedded agriculture in the Department of Rural Development and Agrarian Reform, while the Western Cape provincial department has only agriculture as its mandate.

In provincial departments, M&E units are identified as the custodians of departmental evaluation systems (DPME, 2015:6). However, the organisational structure for M&E and human resources allocation is not standard across the nine provinces of South Africa. Firstly, the WCDoA is the only provincial department that does not have a unit (structure) dedicated to M&E evaluation (DAFF, 2019:2). Instead, the function of M&E is embedded in the responsibilities of each programme manager. Nonetheless, it has a Strategic Management unit, which is responsible for strategic planning and coordination of M&E (DAFF, 2019:7).

Table 6.2: Seniority of Officials Heading M&E Units in Provinces

Provincial Department (s)	No. of Provinces	Level of M&E Manager
Free State	1	Deputy Director General
EC, GP, LP, MP and NC	4	Chief Director
KZN, NW and WC	3	Director

Source: DAFF, (2019:7).

Furthermore, provinces have structured the unit responsible for M&E in a differentiated manner. In five of the provincial departments, the unit responsible for M&E is headed by a Chief Director, while at three provinces it is led by a Director. In one province (Free State), M&E is headed by a Deputy Director General (DDG). The only similarity between all provinces is that M&E units report directly to a head of department (HOD). This is important, as it potentially places the unit in a position to inform or influence decision-making at the highest level of the organisation.

6.3 Evaluations in the Agricultural Sector

Of all the South African public sectors, the agricultural sector is one of the most actively involved in the practice of evaluations. In this research, reference to the agricultural sector and the evaluations conducted is limited to government departments and excludes private agricultural organisations, such as banks, commodity groups or agribusinesses as well universities and other interest groups. Since the inception of the NEPF in 2011, at least 29 evaluations were conducted in the sector by national departments (the DAFF and the DRDLR) as well as the provincial departments of the Western Cape and Gauteng. Interestingly, most of the evaluations were conducted at a provincial level, rather than by the national departments. This makes sense because agricultural activity takes place primarily at the provincial level, with vast differences between provinces and locations. At

least 22 of the evaluations conducted in the agricultural sector were undertaken by the provincial sphere of government. At this level, 21 of these evaluations were conducted by the Western Cape, while Gauteng undertook one evaluation.

Table 6.3: No of Evaluations Conducted by National and Provincial Departments in the Agricultural Sector

Sphere of government	No. of Evaluations	Total No. of Evaluations
National	DAFF	4
	DRDLR	3
Provincial	Western Cape	21
	Gauteng	1

Source: Derived from the DPME Repository of Evaluations

Ironically, the primary mandate of the national departments was to establish policy, finance its implementation via conditional grants and then monitor and evaluate its implementation. At this level of governance, it is fair to expect that the key interest would be to gather data and make analyses to determine whether the policies are properly implemented or making the right impact (essentially evaluations). There are at least three reasons for the low amount of evaluations at the national sphere of the agricultural sector, namely a lack of political will to embrace evaluations; limited capacity to conduct evaluations; and insufficient budget for evaluations.

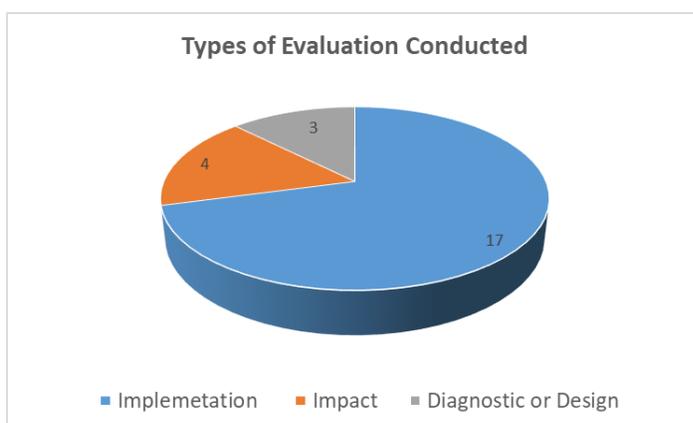
At the provincial level, the (WCDoA) is by far the most active department in the practice of formal evaluations. Interestingly, unlike most of other provincial departments, the WCDOA does not have a unit specifically designated for M&E (DAFF, 2019). The other provinces have units at senior management level tasked with M&E. While agricultural

activity vastly differs between provinces/locations, the provinces with more human resources should have been somewhat active in conducting formal evaluations. Nonetheless, what has set the WCDoA apart from other provinces is the approach it adopts in conducting evaluations. The defining feature of this approach is ensuring that each year there is a budget allocated for evaluations that are conducted by external service providers.

6.3.1 Type of Evaluations Conducted

The three types of evaluations that have mainly been conducted in the agricultural sector since 2012 are implementation, impact and diagnostic/design evaluation. As reflected in Figure 6.2 below, implementation evaluation has been the most common type of evaluation conducted in the sector with 17 evaluations, followed by impact evaluations at 4, and 3 diagnostic/design evaluations. This can be explained by the fact that implementation evaluation can be undertaken at any point of the implementation of a programme, while impact evaluations can only be undertaken at an appropriate interval after implementation has begun, or even at the end of a programme (CDC, 2020). In addition, at the inception of the NEPF in 2011, government concern was service delivery improvement, which can be best served by implementation evaluations. At this point, very few new programmes were introduced, hence the low number of design/diagnostic evaluations conducted.

Figure 6.1: Types of Evaluation Conducted



Source: Created by the researcher

6.3.2 Summary of Evaluations Conducted in the Agricultural Sector

This section provides a summary of the purpose and the main recommendations of the various evaluations in the agricultural sector. For the purposes of the study, the purpose and recommendations become the basis for subsequent assessment of the actual use of the findings from the evaluations, by tracking changes that related to either the purpose of the study or the offered recommendations. The summary also includes the quality assessment score where it was available. M&E departments assess the quality of evaluations based on certain standards. Each of the standards is scored using a five-point Likert scale rating of very poor (1), inadequate (2), adequate (3), good (4) and excellent (5) (Leslie *et al.*, 2015:3). The quality assessment tool sets the minimum quality threshold at the score of 3 (Goldman *et al.*, 2015:5). None of the evaluations indicated in Table 6.3 below scored under the threshold score of 3. This means that when the evaluations were conducted, their quality was at the very least adequate.

Table 6.4: Implementation Evaluations

Title	Date of completion	Purpose of the study	Recommendations	Quality Assessment Score
1. Implementation Evaluation of the Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP): June 2009 - June 2012	2013	<p>To assess the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether the institutional arrangements that were set in place to support the implementation of the CRDP are appropriate and clear about their roles and responsibilities; • Whether the CRDP is achieving its policy goals • How the programme can be strengthened and up-scaled through learning from what has been done 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen the CRDP's institutional arrangements and integrated planning processes, including strengthening local level Institutions and the Council of Stakeholders operating in each site • Improve the CRDP's strategy for mobilising and empowering communities by ensuring that site level communication plans are in place and implemented and a revised theory of change is developed for the CRDP's community mobilisation and empowerment component. • Improve the CRDP's Rural Job Creation Model and support for economic livelihoods • Improve CRDP targeting of key groups (including youth, unemployed, women, elderly, people living with HIV/AIDs) through improved guidelines and target setting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3.71
2. Implementation Evaluation of the Restitution Programme	2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To assess whether the Restitution Programme has been implemented efficiently and effectively • To identify how the Programme can be improved in time for the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The focus and function of the CRLR and the Restitution Programme must be more clearly defined and better communicated • The Restitution Programme's business and decision-making process must be reviewed, finalised and documented in terms of a strict, rule-based procedure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3.84

		<p>next phase of the restitution process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The different management information systems currently in operation or development should be rationalised into a single, web-based management information system • The CRLR’s provincial offices should be given responsibility for all non-capital aspects of provincial programmes • Performance management systems should be put in place, which manage national and provincial staff according to specific, measurable indicators • A competent human resource (HR) management capacity should be established within the CRLR • The current monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system should be broadened to measure intermediate outputs of the settlement process as well as qualitative aspects of both the settlement process (e.g. its timelines) and its outcome (the completeness, integrity and stability of a settled claim) • The CRLR should be formally absolved of any responsibility for post-settlement support, local economic development processes and funding of related activities (beyond that associated with the financial settlement of claims). 	
<p>3. Implementation Evaluation of the Recapitalisation and Development Programme</p>	<p>2015</p>	<p>To establish whether</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RECAP is on track to achieve its intended objectives • Advise on what needs to be done to ensure better implementation of the programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the objectives of RECAP to make them more clear and specific • Ensure a common understanding of RECAP amongst its stakeholders by engaging in an all-inclusive process to discuss the nature, operation, purpose and objectives of the programme • Develop clear and specific selection criteria for beneficiaries and land reform farms for recapitalisation and development in line with the objectives of RECAP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4.10

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replace the current RECAP grant funding with loan funding • Establish guidelines to limit the amount of RECAP funding per project in order to widen the coverage of the programme and ensure that the funding model is adapted to the various agricultural production systems • The budget for the Restitution Programme needs to be re-considered • The current filing and recordal system must be cleaned up and systematised • Looking forward, all outstanding claims should be settled before any work begins on the processing of new claims arising from the recently announced second phase of restitution • No new claims should be processed before the criteria and focus determining access to the second restitution window have been translated into the SOP and incorporated into the new MIS 	
4. Evaluation of the Implementation of the Extension Recovery Plan	2016	To assess whether the ERP was implemented efficiently and effectively, and to identify how the Plan can be strengthened going forward		
5. Evaluation of the Availability, Extent and Utilisation of Agricultural Economic Databases	2016	To examine the availability, extent, and utilisation of the division's agricultural economic databases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The division should ensure that a complete list of their database inventory is publically viewable so that users know what information they can request • The inventory should note the data source/s used as well as the date it was updated • The division should consider additional means of disseminating information about their databases, including a newsletter and the use of social media 	3.35

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More effort should be dedicated to improving its user-friendliness as well as using it as a means to communicate information about the databases and the updates thereof • The division should investigate ways of making the databases downloadable from their website • The online tools should be made compatible with application-based platforms • In the medium term, an in-house IT expert should be hired to enable the improvement and maintenance of the website • In the long term, the division could possibly be more effective if placed together with the department’s geographical information system (GIS) unit • The division needs to revisit its primary target groups. • The division needs to determine the extent to which influencing decision-making is one of its aims • The division needs to make the links between the division’s objectives, actions and the Provincial Strategic Objectives clear 	
6. Implementation Evaluation of the Comprehensive Rural Development Programme In Dysselsdorp, Oudtshoorn Western Cape: February 2010 - March 2013	2014	To assess what successes and challenges had been experienced, and to identify suggestions for improved implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A facilitated rapid action planning process (using a methodology called the Participatory Appraisal of Competitive Advantage or PACA) should be initiated in order to develop a shared understanding (amongst key government, community and private sector leadership) of practical actions, resources, roles and responsibilities required to unlock priority economic opportunities • The WCDoA considers the establishment of an Eden District public-private sector CRDP task team to ensure the coordinated implementation of private sector initiatives and streamline/focus combined support in high potential job-creation and economic opportunities 	

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The results of this evaluation should be shared with private sector partners to encourage interest in either investing in the area and/or expanding existing enterprises in the region • A municipal incentives policy must be developed by the local municipality to prioritise disadvantaged communities like Dysselsdorp 	
7. Western Cape Agricultural Land Reform Project Performance Evaluation	2019	To determine the success of a sample of 100 of the 243 agricultural and reform projects supported by the department from 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exit strategies for cessation of support: The Department needs to develop exit strategies both for projects that are able to succeed on their own, as well as for project farms that are failing to such an extent that continued support is no longer justified. • Develop a dynamic outcome-based project success-monitoring tool and monitor progress • Support continued formalisation and organisation of businesses for continued rollout of support • Skills development and regular business development planning: Regular planning of these components needs to be a critical focus area of support from the Unit of Technical Assistance • Match beneficiaries own capital and physical contribution to the department's financial and non-financial support • Encourage a multiplicity of income sources: Both off-farm and on-farm income sources are paramount as income sources to support eventual full-scale and full-time farming involvement • Greater focus on environmental sustainable patterns of production and smart farming technology 	

<p>8. An Evaluation of the Market Access Programme</p>	<p>2014</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To determine to what extent and how the market linkages introduced through MAP have been exploited and sustained • To determine to what extent and how training and capacity building offered by MAP has helped farmers and agribusinesses to identify new market opportunities and/or sustain existing ones • To determine how and to what extent the technical advice offered to farmers has influenced them to deliver better quality produce and thereby gain access to high value markets • To determine how and to what extent farmer compliance with standards and regulations has influenced market access • To determine how the programme should be modified or redesigned to optimise success, minimise failures, efficiently increase reach and scale of implementation, take advantage of unexploited opportunities and pursue highest-yield programme options 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake more comprehensive profiling of the potential programme participants and the viability of their enterprise potential to aid programme selection • Address and clarify tenure and land rights management issues on land reform projects where there are group rights • Distinguish between market readiness and market access and develop associated general and sectoral criteria • Conduct more in-depth research on the actual marketing arrangements of small-scale producers and the functioning and cost structure of informal markets which many supply • Redesign MAP to include a market readiness programme (MRP) and a market access programme (MAP) with the full involvement and support of extension personnel augmented by private sector commodity specialists from the outset • Specify roles, relationships and mutual obligations of the service provider(s) and programme participants up front • Ensure a closer alignment between MRP and MAP with CASP and the Recapitalization and Development Programme • Create a distinctive identity for MRP and MAP to ensure broader visibility and recognition and ensure alignment with other similar initiatives 	<p>3.46</p>
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<p>9. Assessment of the Western Cape Agribusiness Investment Unit (AIU)</p>	<p>2015</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To evaluate the confidence levels of existing investors and their experiences of engaging with the Western Cape Agribusiness Investment Unit (AIU). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Playing to your strengths – the AIU must build on its strong support mandate and expand itself to become a ‘one-stop shop’ for investors in the Western Cape agribusiness sector More strategic engagements with investors and better ‘follow-up’ services Disseminating information to investors through workshops, roadshows and broad engagements Monitoring and Evaluation of the investors’ projects and businesses and feedback on them from the AIU Continued research and “needs analysis” of investors in the sector. The AIU acting as a facilitator with government and expanding into a lobbying role for investors 	
<p>10. Evaluation of the Western Cape Department of Agriculture’s Commodity Approach</p>	<p>2015</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To determine the extent to which it makes a difference in the development of smallholder farmers To identify unintended and indirect outcomes of the programme To analyse the key interventions To develop recommendations for the improvement of programme design and implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project support should be longer than a year, programmed over a period reflective of the natural business cycle of the farming operation Renewal of annual support should be contingent on the achievement of agreed deliverables (e.g. production targets) External financiers are key stakeholders of the Commodity Approach; therefore, business plans should identify when projects will be in a position to access funding sources other than grant funding; and there should be a co-contribution requirement for larger, more commercially orientated projects Technical agronomic input should be provided when developing business plans. 	

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business plans should show how the support requested would contribute to the improved commercial viability of the project for the full period of support requested • Extension officers should be involved in developing business plans given their knowledge of the project and to ensure they are familiar with the project once it commences • Projects should be required to submit progress reports post-support. Since the WCDoA has contracted quality assurers to assess the quality of support provided, the quality assurers' role should include collection, validation and review of these reports • Projects should be assessed on a competitive basis, by comparing the merits, strengths and risks of each project relative to others in the portfolio • There is a need to standardise and improve the mentor recruitment, management and remunerations arrangements. • A marketing strategy should be designed to expand the reach of the programme and to ensure that all projects are aware of this source of funding • CPACs should consider how project scale could be enhanced to promote project sustainability. This includes leveraging financing, encouraging group arrangements for the purchase of inputs and the aggregation of produce, sharing of farm implements, machinery and facilities, and collaboration with other governmental departments and non-government or not-for-profit entities 	
11. Evaluation of the Western Cape Farm Worker of the Year Competition	2015	To determine the extent to which the Farm Worker of the Year Competition has resulted in a positive change in the socio-economic conditions of participating farm workers	<p>Structural Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redefining, expansion and standardisation of existing categories • Public and explicit exposure of all provincial winners 	

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The expansion of assessment criteria to include an on-farm practical/qualitative assessment • In the selection of regional judges, the impartiality of these individuals must be ensured • Judges of respective categories must be competent in the categories they are asked to evaluate. • Expanding the marketing of the competition • The competition must be adapted to accommodate agricultural activities outside the deciduous fruit industry, such as livestock and tea farming • Expanding the impact of the competition via the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More learning opportunities for all participants, <i>not</i> only winners ▪ Organising opportunities for social interaction between the farm workers in a region ▪ Constituting a regional Prestige Farm Worker Forum of previous regional winners <p>Programmatic and Policy Recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The status of the competition must be elevated to at least a sub-programme level • Expansion of programme facilitating, administrative and technical support to regional level • The standardisation of regional management structures and institutions ensuring neutrality • Enhanced focus on job specific educational and training opportunities for all participants 	
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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating partnerships with the private sector for both training and sponsorship purposes • Utilisation of the competition as a strategic vehicle towards sustainable land reform initiatives within the Western Cape • Consideration should be given to renaming this competition • Sensitise producers to the philosophical underpinning and motivation of the competition • Accentuate the economic value of the competition to the broader farming enterprise • Accentuate the importance of the buy-in of producers to enhance the impact of competition • Solicit input from the (agricultural) private sector towards the sustainability of the competition • Acknowledge more participants in the provincial competition than the overall winner • Formalise a clear mandate for the Prestige Farm Worker Forum as a mouth piece for the greater farm worker community • Replicate the Provincial Prestige Farm Worker Forum model at regional level 	
12. Rural Development Evaluation	2016	To assess the extent to which the implementation of the RDM has a) influenced rural development in three selected rural development nodes, and b) supported the implementation of the CRDP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provincial departments and municipalities should develop a menu of feasible projects for which funding is ring-fenced and pre-approved based on a notional budget • All departmental Annual Performance Plans (APPs) must include a section on rural development and on the programme in particular 	

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an “actor network approach” should be also adopted in the model in order to erode departmentalism in government and to generate and share new knowledge about transversal government • The WCDoA should incrementally establish a link between the RDM and next phase of the CRDP namely Agri-parks • Provide more staff for WCDoA (RD) to assist with the up-scaled activity and the time consuming demands entailed in facilitating community participation and building interdepartmental cooperation • The COS should play a key role in facilitating the CCA process by aligning community needs with what local and provincial government has set as feasible, pre-approved projects, such as social upliftment, training, infrastructure and economic development • Local government and WCDoA should financially support the COS • Political analysis should be conducted by the WCDoA to understand dynamics, hierarchies and conflicts of interest within a ward and between wards • WCDoA to call a summit of all COS leaders in the 16 nodes to increase comparative learning across municipalities (and elements of this evaluation shared with COS) • A COS team should do presentations to the provincial legislature on rural development challenges • COS should be allocated meeting space in the municipal building • A concerted effort must be made to ensure that agri-workers are included in COS meetings • COS reports, meetings and public events could be published in the local newspaper, through a municipal newsletter or by pamphlet 	
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<p>13. Evaluation of the Implementation, Design and Strategy of Khulisa Agri-processing</p>	<p>2018</p>	<p>The purpose of the evaluation was to do the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the Khulisa Agri-Processing project according to its design (Was the intervention in theory designed in a robust manner and was it appropriate and fit-for-purpose?) • Implement (focus on the actual delivery process of the project, and explore the suitability and assumptions made in the theory of change for the project) • Assure emerging impact (focus on effectiveness and current and expected project achievements in relation to intended objectives and outcomes). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The WCG should continue to utilise the Khulisa approach, which seeks to focus and prioritise key areas within agri-processing that can unleash the greatest growth potential and employment creation • WCG should develop a mechanism that can regularly provide information on key constraints and opportunities across the sector as well as within sub-sectors • Future programmatic efforts should be primarily focused on the identification and amelioration of the generic, cross-sectoral constraints (levers), with more sub-sector specific interventions implemented only where sub-sectoral feedback and prioritisation clearly justifies sub-sector focused interventions. • The inclusion of existing and ongoing programmes should be determined by whether the programme in question addresses the key constraints and or opportunities identified within the sector • The skills programme, going forward, should be fully integrated into the planning and project management processes of Khulisa Agri-Processing. • There should be sufficient inter-departmental alignment between DOA and DEDAT regarding roles and responsibilities • Future Khulisa programmes should implement a more deliberate and specific results-based monitoring system <p>Halal strategic intent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured support for the halal sector should be continued through building on the institutional capacities developed • Government should continue to support the process underway towards clarifying halal certification; but allow the halal sector and governance structures to facilitate and inform this process going forward 	
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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The merits of the halal industrial park promotion process should be reviewed • The halal export-promotion activities should be continually supported beyond Khulisa Agri-Processing. <p>Wine and brandy strategic intent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Export-promotion support should continue to be offered to the wine industry • The merits of supporting both WESGRO and Wines of South Africa (WOSA) should be carefully reviewed, and consideration given to the potential inefficiencies of this current model • Efforts to support the geographical identity (GI) process should be limited to addressing clear constraints expressed that are within the mandate of DOA <p>Local production capacity strategic intent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The overall theory of change and targets for this initiative should be carefully interrogated • Efforts to operationalise the residue-testing facility should be prioritised 	
<p>14. Evaluation of the LandCare Sub-Programme</p>	<p>2018</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To assess the current LandCare model's results with a view to documenting its optimal theory of change • To determine the contribution of the WCDoA's LandCare programme to the social, agricultural-economic and environmental outcomes in a selection of cases. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LandCare should be clarified as a programmatic intervention with spatially defined areas in which it seeks to coordinate its activities with those of other stakeholders • WCDoA should define the criteria for prioritising the spaces in which LandCare seeks to drive sustainable natural resource management within an adaptive management approach • WCDoA LandCare should build its capacity for social facilitation to expand environmental stewardship networks across socio-economic contexts 	

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WCDa LandCare should develop a results-based planning, monitoring & evaluation toolkit that is differentiated based on the nature of the LandCare case, service provision and stage of implementation. • WCDa LandCare needs to set out the steps and platforms it uses for appropriate communication and coordination of planning and implementation with other institutional actors to avoid duplication of efforts • The theory of change should be considered as a more optimal reflection of LandCare’s programme theory going forward 	
<p>15. Evaluation of the Implementation and Impact of the WIETA Code: Evaluation Report</p>	<p>2018</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the impacts of evaluation of the WIETA code and the labour, occupational health and safety and housing standards contained in the WIETA code. • Identifying how the impact of implementation of the WIETA code can be improved • Identify how the programme design supporting the WEITA code implementation could be improved to increase impact • Determine the monetary value and compliance category of the private and or public sector investment in member businesses in compliance with the WIETA code 	<p>Audit Fatigue and Costs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased financial support from cellars towards suppliers (producers, labour providers, etc.) to assist them with WIETA membership and audits • Industry and public funders to continue providing financial support to WIETA activities, recognising the important role this subsidy plays in keeping audit and other costs low • Improved communication by the industry to its members on the role of audits as part of the cost of doing business, specifically relating to market access. <p>Balance between auditing and unlocking capital:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WIETA support be extended to higher-risk WIETA members or those with a limited ability to afford the costs associated with code compliance • Initiatives to increase WIETA membership by entities that do not sell to international markets (as a high-risk group in terms of market reputational risk) be supported by the industry 	

<p>16. Implementation Evaluation of the Youth Development Initiatives of the Western Cape Department of Agriculture</p>	<p>2018</p>	<p>To gauge the quality of the initiatives and the impact they have made on the lives of the youth of the Western Cape, specifically rural youth as well as on the Department and the agricultural sector.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop overarching goals and targets for all programmes with youth development initiatives and strengthen record-keeping capabilities for improved future monitoring and evaluation • Re-evaluate the current programme design, the job descriptions of interns and communication strategies • Expand the network of external host employers and provide training (similar to mentor training) • Create opportunities for beneficiaries to network and build relationships with the private sector 	
<p>17. Mid-Term Evaluation of the Siyazondla Homestead Food Gardens Programme</p>	<p>2012</p>	<p>To assess the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of food gardens initiated in households in the prioritised 50 wards of the province • The benefits of such an investment at the household level and in relation to individual members of the beneficiary households against the costs to government of establishing these household food gardens • The potential of such a series of modest initiatives in achieving food security at the household and community level • The extent to which the government-initiated household food gardens are sustainable and 	<p>Decentralised and localised extension model</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop local extension centres and storage depots • Develop local extension and technical support capacity, for example via community development workers (CDW) • Support local organisational development, e.g. seed-saving clubs, stokvels • Encourage peer-based learning from successful growers <p>Information management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record keeping should be standardised and regularly updated to facilitate future follow-ups, monitoring and evaluation • Regular monitoring and evaluation should be incorporated within the programme strategy, including data on food security and dietary diversity, both for purposes of screening beneficiaries and for evaluating impact <p>Targets and Budgets:</p>	<p>3.34</p>

		<p>the factors contributing to their sustainability or lack of sustainability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budgets should be increased in alignment with targets and ring-fenced budgetary commitments should be maintained over several years • Targets should be set in alignment with most recent population counts for the various areas in conjunction with data on food security, poverty and deprivation <p>Appropriate technology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate sustainable technology into starter packs e.g. worm-bins, bokashi composters, locally-manufactured rain tanks • Eliminate technology which appears under-utilised, bulky and expensive (hose-pipes, sprayer fittings, poles) <p>Sustainability and Resilience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish local demonstration and learning sites as resource centres • Encourage seed saving • Incorporate pest management into training, (e.g. organic pesticide production and use, intercropping) and include rat traps in the starter packs • Formalise continuity with other programmes, using this programme to identify and recruit beneficiaries for community food gardens and co-operative development • Encourage beneficiaries to qualify for increasing levels of support by demonstrating success and sustainability • Establish mentorship and support programmes through local capacity (CDWs or others trained and supported by GDARDRD agricultural advisors) • Support the establishment of local community seedling nurseries with purchase agreements for new beneficiaries 	
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			<p>Financial impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate access to land for entry-level commercial growing through high-level involvement with IDPs, local councillors and community dignitaries • Incorporate training for market gardening in advanced training <p>Logistics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve logistics by either acquiring and maintaining a larger fleet of delivery vehicles, or outsourcing delivery to a commercial logistics company • Establish local resource centres and warehouses/depots • Use a voucher system for beneficiaries to order and claim items appropriate to their context, sourcing from local commercial suppliers <p>Institutional linkages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closer collaboration with other provincial and local government departments, which can improve access to productive inputs and land • Strengthen linkages with other food security initiatives such as food banks and food parcels to improve food security during non-productive seasons 	
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Table 6.5: Impact Evaluations

Title	Date of completion	Purpose of the study	Recommendations	Quality Assessment Score
1. Impact Evaluation of the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP)	29 June 2015	<p>To determine whether CASP is achieving its policy goals</p> <p>To assess in particular the impact of the Programme on livelihoods, market access, commercialisation and agricultural production.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CASP should be institutionalised or mainstreamed within DAFF to ensure proper coordination and participation of directorates that should be playing key roles in the implementation of the programme • The current CASP funding approach of a wholesale grant should be discontinued • The scope and coverage of CASP should be reduced to increase its effectiveness, with special emphasis on the commercialisation of small-scale agriculture • DAFF and provincial departments of agriculture should increase their efforts to promote market access and commercialisation • CASP support should be extended to role players other than farmers within the agricultural value chain (e.g. local agri-processing). • DAFF should endeavour to improve the involvement of youth, women and people with disabilities in CASP-supported projects, particularly in project management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.79
2. Evaluation of the Impact of the Long-Term Crop	2015	To provide a comprehensive evaluation of the impact of the long-term crop rotation trial on the shift		

Rotation Trails at Langgewens		from monoculture cropping to rotation in the Swartland and on the sustainability of farming systems in the grain producing areas		
3. Impact Evaluation of the Food Security on Household Food Security in the Western Cape	2015	To determine the impact of the Food Security Programme on household food security in the Western Cape for the period March 2009 to March 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solve weaknesses and inequalities with regard to community garden management/ownership, labour reimbursement and gains • Support development of family smallholders or commercial farming enterprises • Improve beneficiary targeting • Review garden input and equipment (suitcase) • Streamline, intensify and advance training offered, and develop additional capacity • Implement permanent training/advice support and mentoring • Implement a food production strengthening and self-sustainability programme • Improve stakeholder collaboration • Monitor and evaluate productivity and food security of beneficiaries • Undertake further research 	
4. Micro Agricultural Financial Institutions of South Africa	2016	To determine whether the MAFISA scheme is achieving its policy goals and the effect of the MAFISA scheme on beneficiaries including job creation, entrepreneurial development, income generation, creation of ease of access to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design a unique database, a singular reporting format, data formatting rules and concurrent and immediate data cleaning • Financial intermediaries' contracts should be cognisant of the fact that the agricultural sector is heterogeneous 	3.80

<p>(MAFISA) Impact Assessment</p>		<p>credit facilities, poverty alleviation, production changes and production range</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-site technical support is a fundamental requirement for smallholder farmers • MAFISA to explore an alternative funding model that covers monitoring and support • Safety nets including cheap insurance should be explored before DAFF makes a policy decision on offering insurance to smallholder farmers • MAFISA must improve processes and accelerate services or pressurise/motivate existing financial services to support smallholder farmers, as well as improve the governance and administration between DAFF and its financial intermediaries • Improving the rental services for machinery and equipment and of making fixed improvements to smallholder farmers • Expand the range of production inputs that can be financed, as these are not limited to diesel, seeds, livestock feed/medicine, wages, or hiring equipment • Loan durations need to be made more flexible • Limit political interference • Consider the role and place of production grants vs MAFISA production loans as these grants are encouraging strategic default • Address the shortage of agricultural land • Improve timeous decision-making between DAFF and its financial intermediaries • Explore means of accrediting more financial intermediaries that are close to smallholder farmers and who can offer them the technical onsite support they need 	
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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • better working relations between the CASP pillars so as to offer smallholder farmers the necessary support as the policy intended 	
5. Impact Evaluation of the Structured Agricultural Education and Training Programme (SAET) Sub-programme: Higher Education and Training (HET), for the period 2009 to 2014	2016	To determine the extent to which the SAET HET offerings answer to the needs of the sector and contribute to youth employment	<p>Programme specific recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce exposure that is more practical and opportunities to include work integrated learning (WIL) into the higher certificate courses and allowing for more classroom time in the diploma courses • Explore the potential to offer an HET qualification, which allows students to become agricultural extension officers, or at least establish pathways (via other institutions) for graduates to pursue this as a career • The college should negotiate with universities in the Western Cape and other provinces to accept B.Agric graduates directly into their Honours programmes <p>Other Recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointment or assignment of a senior manager to manage relationships, put formal structures and agreements in place and facilitate regular meetings and communication with the agriculture industry • More practical, hands-on exposure and WIL opportunities should be incorporated into the HET programmes (particularly higher certificate courses) to better prepare students for the workplace • Formal academic support should be provided to students to help them succeed and complete their qualifications • Fill vacant positions at the college as a matter of urgency (particularly the academic head and student support staff) 	

Table 6.6: Diagnostic Evaluations

Title	Date of completion	Purpose of the study	Recommendations	Quality Assessment Score
1. Diagnostic Evaluation of the Smallholder Farmer Sector	2016	To synthesise the lessons from existing evaluations to develop the basis (diagnostic) for a coherent overall policy framework to support smallholder farmers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The results of this evaluation inform final revisions to the Comprehensive Producer Development Strategy (CPDS) and the operationalisation of the new extension policy • A task force under the auspices of the CPDS should be established to review the services and institutional mechanisms needed and develop a plan of action for the different farmer categories • A survey should be conducted, which can provide a good base of data on the different categories of farmers. <p>Subsistence farmers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DAFF should develop a new programme for subsistence-orientated smallholders to contract NGOs (or other local service providers) to provide environmentally appropriate community-based extension services • DAFF should target provincial and district extension services to smallholders in informal (loose) value chains, where they are likely to have the most impact • DAFF should aim to create an enabling environment for the provision of private extension services to smallholders in formal (tight) value chains, to enhance the farmer's voice and facilitate equitable access 	3.80

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DAFF should consider integrating small-scale commercial farmers into the dynamic commercial services sector, through a combination of incentives and using BEE targets to achieve greater parity in service delivery 	
2. Diagnostic Evaluation of the Impact of the Legislative Environment on the Agricultural Sector in the Western Cape	2015	To understand the impact of the legislative environment on farmers in the Western Cape and to propose ways that supportive impacts can be strengthened and negative impacts reduced	<p><i>Burden for Housing Falling on Farmers/Issues with ESTA</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake further research to consider the burden for housing falling on farmers/issues with ESTA <p><i>Complexity, Cost and Delays in Accessing Water Rights</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a leaflet outlining current attempts by the Department of Water and Sanitation and other stakeholders to confirm existing water rights. It should be clear to farmers with whom they need to interact to participate in this process • Undertake a study to evaluate the current administration of water rights in the Western Cape, with a focus on the ease with which water rights can be transferred or leased <p><i>Expensive and Cumbersome Approval Process (EIA)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The WCDoA should engage with the Department of Environmental Affairs to determine whether applications under the Conservation of Agricultural Resources Act is sufficiently aligned with the “One Environmental System” to allow for greater synergy in the application processes for environmental approvals • The WCDoA should disseminate information about farmers’ options regarding application and licensing processes (including, for example, class EIA applications where a number of farmers in a region can apply for authorisation through one EIA process) 	

			<p><i>Preferential procurement – smallholder farmers</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ways to make it easier to include these farmers in public sector contracts using existing public sector preferential procurement frameworks should be considered, and the WCDoA should provide guidance on what it considers to be best-practice in this regard • The WCDoA maintains a list of all the farmers supported through its programmes, including those it manages/implements on behalf of DAFF and/or other government departments • The B-BBEE Codes of Good Practice (2013) should be considered and guidance provided to smallholder farmers on how they can benefit from the new Codes <p><i>Restrictive labour legislation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The WCDoA considers an awareness campaign to make farmers aware of the online platforms that are available from the Department of Labour (DoL) • The WCDoA should engage the Department of Labour and other organisations that undertake labour audits (e.g. SIZA) to align audits to reduce disruption to farm activities • The WCDoA should consider the relative merits of supporting the development of farm services firms that can employ workers directly on a permanent basis to provide seasonal labour to farmers when required 	
<p>3. Evaluation of the Research Information Needs of Dairy Producers in the Western Cape with a Focus on</p>	<p>2016</p>	<p>To examine research projects and information, dissemination and use of such research information that was relevant to dairy producers using or partially using total mixed rations (TMR)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elsenburg: Dairy Unit and the newly appointed successor of Dr. Carel Muller should focus on establishing, rebuilding and/or enhancing relationships and trust between the Unit, dairy farmers in the Cape Winelands and Swartland regions, as well as the key role players in the dairy sector. 	

<p>Producers in the Cape Winelands and Swartland regions making full or partial use of Total Mixed Rations (TMRs)</p>		<p>in the Cape Winelands and Swartland regions of the Western Cape Province</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elsenburg: Dairy Unit should review and realign their dairy farm in order to be on par with the dairy farms in the Cape Winelands and Swartland regions by making full or partial use of total mixed rations (TMRs). • Increase farmers’ awareness of and access to research conducted by Elsenburg: Dairy Unit • Relevant and crucial areas where research and information should be generated • Aligning Elsenburg: Dairy Unit’s research objectives with the needs of farmers • Address the training needs of dairy producing farmers and staff • Elsenburg: Dairy Unit to improve their dairy needs and information research programme 	
<p>4. Diagnostic and Design Evaluation of the Western Cape Department of Agriculture’s Programme 6 – Agricultural Economics</p>	<p>2017</p>	<p>To provide feedback to the WCDoA, and other relevant government authorities involved in policy administration, concerning the role and functioning of agricultural economists and the services required by their clients in the WC</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme 6 to initiate an organisational re-design process to address identified issues to enhance service delivery • The WCDoA should raise the need to review the role and mandate of provincial departments in approving land reform business plans. Depending on the outcome of this review, the financial implications regarding national government funding to provinces may also need to be ascertained • WCDoA and DEDAT to engage in clarifying Programme 6’s role in implementing the WC provincial agri processing strategy – This includes identifying and addressing the potential budgetary implications should an increased role for Programme 6 be agreed • WCDoA to identify human resource options (e.g. training and skills enhancement of existing officials located at district-level) to enhance the 	

			<p>district-level capacity to deliver and expand access to selected AE services (e.g. financial management and record keeping for emerging farmers)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• WCDoA to strengthen strategic partnerships with retailers and other role-players to enhance local market access opportunities for emerging farmers	
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6.4 Conclusion

The primary objective of this chapter was to introduce the South African agricultural sector, which was the focus of the research. The chapter located the importance of the sector; its constitutional and policy mandate; and the contribution it makes to the national economy and job creation. The agricultural sector is one the most active in evaluations with a total of 29 evaluations conducted since 2012. However, practice of evaluations in the sector is skewed, as the majority of the evaluations (21) were conducted by the WCDoA, while 7 were conducted by the national departments and 1 by Gauteng provincial department. Similarly, the structural organisation of units responsible for conducting evaluations differs across the sectors. Nonetheless, the agricultural sector's practice of evaluations provides a good opportunity to study the use of evaluations. While this chapter was primarily descriptive, a more analytical perspective on the practice of evaluations based on the empirical study is presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

7.1 Introduction

Premised on the high number of evaluations conducted and the strategic role in socio-economic development, the agricultural sector was selected as the focus of the study. In the preceding chapters, the applicability of the UFE approach to the South African public sector and the practice of evaluations in the South African public sector, in general, and the agricultural sector, in particular, were examined in light of a review of the literature and departmental documents.

To gain an in depth understanding of evaluation use and to learn how to promote the effective use of evaluations in the agricultural sector, an empirical study was conducted by means of semi-structured interviews. Based on the sample explained in Chapter 5, these interviews were conducted with 20 participants. The focus of the empirical study was to (a) determine whether evaluations were used; (b) identify barriers to the use of evaluations; (c) assess existing systems aimed at facilitating use; and (d) learn how to enhance the adapted integrated model for the effective utilisation of evaluations in the agricultural sector.

In this chapter, the analysis focusses on points (a) to (c), while point (d) is dealt with in Chapter 8, as it forms the basis of the proposed model. These points and the empirical study are in line with Objectives 2 and 3 of the research, which were to do the following:

- Identify the barriers to the use of evaluation in the South African public service focusing on the agricultural sector.
- Develop an adapted model that facilitates the use of evaluations for the South African agricultural sector.

7.1.1 Background

The empirical study entailed 20 people who participated in the semi-structured interviews that were conducted on the Microsoft Teams meeting platform. As explained in Chapter 5 on methodology, the participants were given code names in order to ensure their anonymity. For the sake of convenience, the codes are outlined in Table 7.1 below.

Table 7.1: Participants' Code Names

Code	Definition
EE	Evaluation expert
DME	DPME official
NME	National M&E official
NPM	National programme manager
PME	Provincial M&E official
PPM	Provincial programme manager
SP	Service provider

Source: Created by the researcher

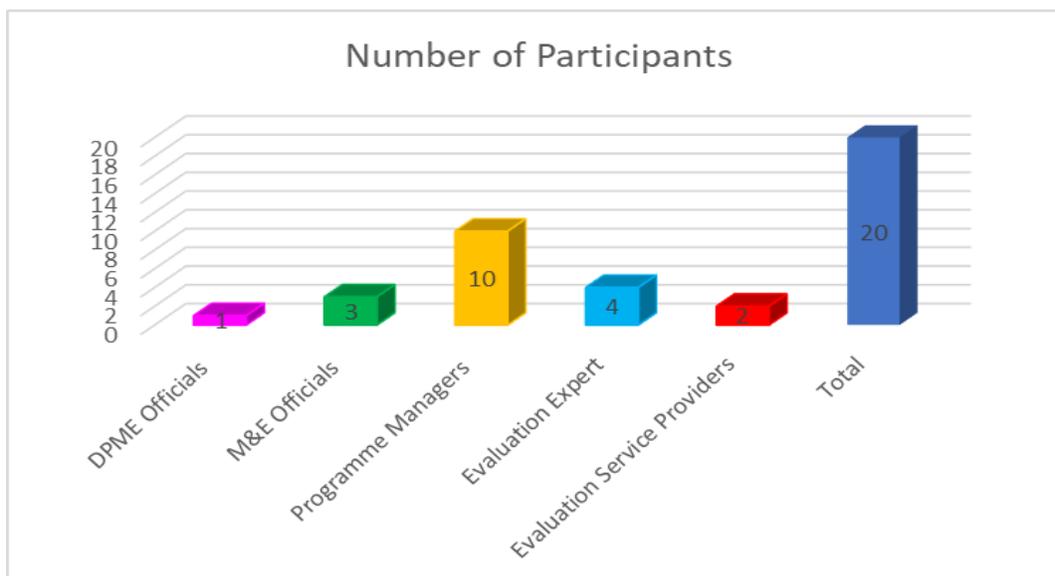
Figure 7.1 below depicts the number of participants in the semi-structured interviews by category. It shows that most of the participants were programme managers (PMs) or representatives from the programme that was evaluated. The choice of 10 PMs was in

line with the number of evaluation studies that were selected (10), which means that for each evaluation conducted there was one programme manager (PM) interviewed.

Two M&E officials were interviewed from the former DAFF. While there was no M&E representative from the former DRDLR, participant DME001, who now works at DPME, held the position of M&E Director in this department when the evaluations were conducted. Therefore, the participant was able to provide information from the perspective of an M&E unit about the evaluations that were conducted in the former DRDLR.

Three evaluations conducted by the WCDoA and one conducted by the Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (GDARD) were included in the study. Out of the 10 PMs interviewed, 4 were from the Western Cape and Gauteng representing each selected evaluation. However, only one provincial M&E official participated because the second province (Gauteng) only conducted one evaluation and no M&E official had knowledge of or had participated in it.

Figure 7.1: Participants by Category



Source: Semi-structured interviewees list

Similarly, three of the four evaluation experts were originally with the DPME when the national evaluations were conducted. This means that they could provide both an oversight and external perspective on the process and practice of evaluations in the agricultural sector, as well as expert views on the practice of evaluations in the public sector. Two service providers (evaluators) that had undertaken an evaluation in the agricultural sector were interviewed. They provided insight on the perspective of the evaluator on the process of evaluation, the use of evaluations and the barriers or challenges to use.

7.2 Evaluation Utilisation

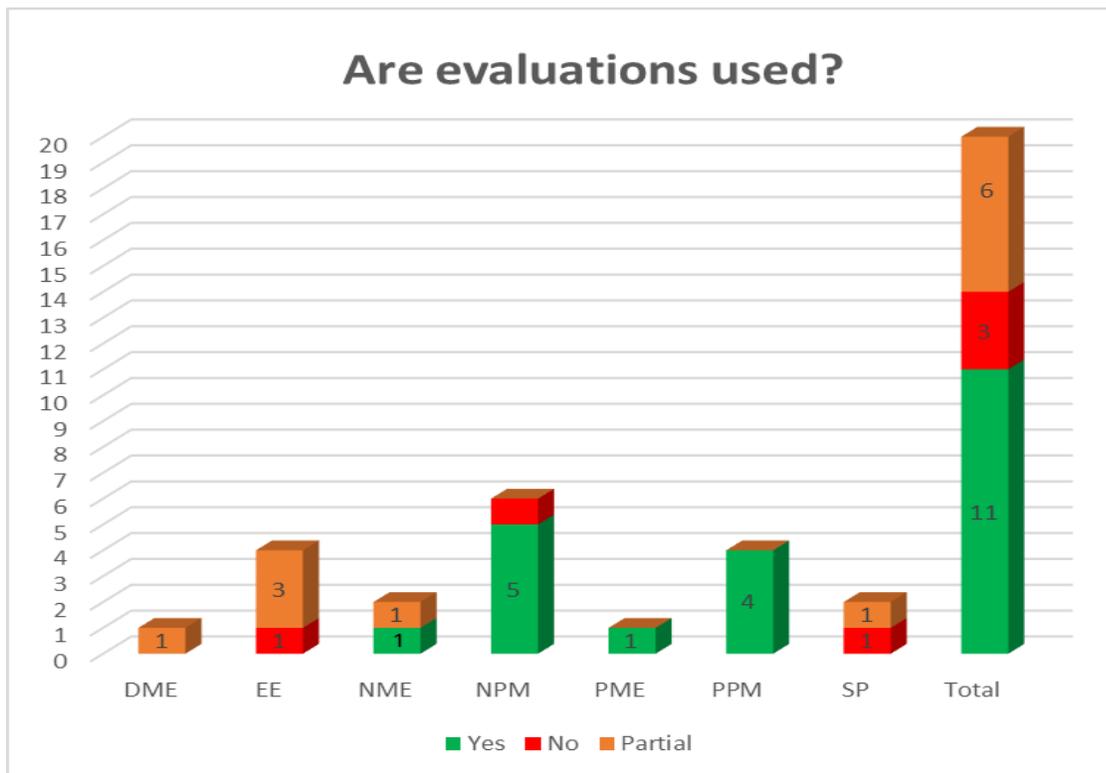
As stated before, one of the objectives of the research was to identify barriers to the use of evaluation in the South African public service focusing on the agricultural sector. Central to the identification of the barriers of use is determining whether evaluations were used in the first place. The definition and types of evaluation use were discussed extensively in Chapter 2. While in most cases, discussion about use tends to focus on instrumental use (when the use of evaluation results in decision-making), it was also established that the evaluation process could be used to learn more about the evaluand (conceptual use) or to support a particular political position (symbolic use).

In the research, the use of evaluations referred primarily to instrumental use because it is more feasible and practical to trace this type of use. In a limited way, some inferences were drawn on conceptual use based on the themes emerging from the data. Therefore, determining whether evaluations were used focused on three elements, namely (a) responses from the participants; (b) management improvement plans (MIPs); and (c) analysis of departmental documents, such as strategic plans and performance plans.

7.2.1 Participant's Responses

During the semi-structured interviews, all participants were asked whether evaluations were used. Figure 7.2 below presents a summary of the responses according to the category of participants.

Figure 7.2: Summary of responses on the use of evaluations



Source: *Semi-structured Interviews data*

Figure 7.2 above shows that the majority of respondents (11) indicated that the evaluations were used, while 6 participants indicated that they were partially used, and only 3 participants indicated that the evaluations were not used. It is important to underline that the positive responses came from one category of respondents, namely PMs. At least 10 out of 11 participants who responded positively were PMs. This context is important because the views would differ according to whether they belong to people responsible for the implementation of the programme (PMs), to individuals responsible for oversight over the programme (M&E officials) or to external experts and service providers.

In addition, all participants were asked to provide an example of how an evaluation was used. Interestingly, while 10 of the PMs indicated that the evaluation was used, only 5 (4 of them provincial PMs) could remember the recommendations and sufficiently articulate how they were used. While the other 6 PMs (all from national departments) responded

positively, they could not explain in any meaningful way how exactly the evaluation was used. In some cases, they indicated that the evaluation had been conducted a long time ago, or they had not received the interview questions beforehand so that they were unable to prepare answers. It is true that some of the evaluations were conducted a while before the interviews, but if PMs could remember that they were used, they should have been able to provide some form of explanation of how they were used.

The lack of knowledge or recollection of how the evaluation was used could be explained by a discussion about the barriers of use. Nonetheless, an explanation could also be found in an observation made by a participant who noted the following:

If you go now to the department to ask them, please provide me with a report on the evaluation that was done I can tell you they don't even have. And if they don't even have, how will they even implement the recommendations in this report. After the evaluation is done, the reports are collecting dust. I don't know how many times I've had been asked to submit the evaluation report (NME002 Transcript, 2021).

The question is why did some PMs maintain that an evaluation was used, even when it was not used, or when they could not even remember its details or how it was used? Part of the answer is that PMs tend to see evaluations as a reflection of their own performance, and therefore naturally would want to create a positive picture. This argument will be placed in context later in the discussion on negative attitudes and perceptions of evaluations.

In contrast to the views of the PMs, six participants outside of the programmes (DPME and M&E officials, evaluation experts, and service providers) believed that evaluations were only partially used. The responses indicating partial use were premised on the fact that recommendations were not used as originally formulated, substantive elements of the evaluation were not used, and there was a selective use of recommendations (EE002 Transcript, 2021; NME001 Transcript, 2021). This shows that the views of participants from outside the programme differed markedly from those of participants from inside the programme.

Similarly, three participants indicated that the evaluations were not used. Based on the discussion about PMs above, it is important to note that one of the three participants who said that evaluation was not used was a PM. In particular, NPM006 Transcript (2021) indicated that the evaluation was not used because it was supposed to inform a review of a policy; however, the policy was reviewed and approved before the evaluation was finalised.

In order to confirm the responses from the participant, an assessment of MIPs and departmental planning documents was conducted.

7.2.2 Management Improvement Plans

MIPs are one the key features of the NES aimed at ensuring that evaluations are used. They are essentially, formal management responses produced by departments after an evaluation, outlining how the department will implement the recommendations of the evaluation (DPME[a], 2014). In certain instances, departments also indicate with which evaluation recommendation they disagree and provide reasons. The purpose of a MIP is to do the following:

- Ensure the utilisation of evaluation findings and consequent strengthening of the programme/project/policy/plan in question
- Track/monitor the implementation of recommendations
- Keep stakeholders abreast of the necessary actions that will be taken to improve the delivery of a programme/project/policy (DPME [a], 2014:1).

Despite the importance of the MIP system in facilitating use, it has been established that it has not contributed significantly to improving evaluation use as envisaged (DPME, 2020:10). Limitations are that not all departments comply with the requirement to develop an MIP and even when it is developed, there is slow progress in its implementation and no reporting (Goldman *et al.*, 2015:5; Samuels *et al.*, 2015:8). In this regard, EE004 Transcript (2021) made the following observation:

My concern is that I am not sure everybody does it the way they are supposed to anymore.

Noncompliance with the MIP process undermines the efforts aimed at ensuring that evaluations are used. It is insufficient to note the recommendations agreed upon and some planned activities when there is no subsequent implementation and reporting. The defining issue for use is whether, beyond a record of decision (improvement plan or cabinet decision), there is any implementation.

An analysis of the MIPs of the 10 selected studies points to the same challenges. In terms of the NES, programmes are expected to report every six months on the progress made in the implementation of the MIP (DRDLR, 2016:1). While all 10 evaluations had MIPs developed, no progress reports were published or posted by the DPME on the repository of evaluations, and none of 20 interviewees could confirm whether progress reports were developed or submitted. In response to the request for MIP progress reports, the DPME indicated that these reports are “seen as confidential between the DPME and the respective department(s)”, and therefore not made public (e-mail response).

However, in the empirical study, two participants indicated that the progress reports were never done because in one evaluation, recommendations were changed by another evaluation, and in the other, the department reported on a new intervention that incorporated the activities in the MIP (PPM002 Transcript, 2021; NPM005 Transcript, 2021). In the case of evaluations conducted in the former DAFF, there appears to have been reluctance to implement the MIP in the first place. This point is made by a participant, who noted the following:

But you also know that as programme managers ... it is them who have to come up with the improvement plans. And that improvement plan should be funded, budget should be allocated from their part. But the fact that they did not agree with the recommendation, they were just not interested into undertaking some of those recommendation. There was no budget that was allocated for implementation of the improvement plan (NME001 Transcript, 2021).

This suggests that if there are problems with the uptake and implementation of an MIP, it will be even more problematic to issue a report on implementation.

The other challenge with MIPs is monitoring and reporting on their implementation. In terms of the NES, departments are expected to report every six months on the progress made in implementing MIPs. However, rather than reporting regularly and as required by MIPs, departments make ad hoc reviews or reports. For instance, in 2016, the former DRDLR conducted an analysis of the implementation of the MIPs of its evaluations. This analysis found that most of the recommendations made for the three evaluations (RECAP, CRDP and Restitution) had been implemented. Although this was not MIP reporting as envisaged, it was an important development, as the department had taken time to reflect on what had happened since the MIPs had been developed. However, a drawback was that these were once-off reports and five years later, there were no reports on the implementation of MIPs.

At the provincial level, the WCDoA requires programme managers to make regular presentations to management meetings on progress with the evaluations (PPM003 Transcript, 2021). The GDARD reviewed progress on the implementation of the Siyazondla Homestead Food Gardens Programme in 2018 (PPM004 Transcript, 2021). However, here too, while there was some form of reporting, it was not in line with the MIP process.

As concluded in Chapter 4, in practice, the MIP process is not a reliable indicator of the use of evaluations. At best, it simply demonstrates that the department discussed the report, adopted certain recommendations and committed to undertake certain activities. Beyond this, there is no evidence in the form of progress reports to show that the committed activities have been implemented. Instead, there are ad hoc and anecdotal reports on some or other aspect the evaluation.

7.2.3 Departmental Planning and Reporting Documents

The South African planning and evaluation system framework requires evaluations to be used in planning, budgeting and organisational improvement (DPME, 2011; DPME,

2019:34). However, one of the weaknesses of the use of the evaluations in the agricultural sector, particularly in the former national departments, was the incorporation of evaluations in the annual performance plans (APPs) or the strategic plans. A review of these planning documents of the former DAFF and DRDLR finds no reference to meaningful use or even to how the evaluations informed the plans. At best, anecdotal references were made to findings of evaluations.

For instance, in both the 2017/18 and 2018/19 APPs, DAFF selectively referred to a positive finding from the CASP Impact Evaluation that indicated that there was some increase in access to extension services (DAFF, 2017:23; DAFF, 2018:6). This reference did not represent the true extent of the findings of the evaluation, nor did it outline any plan to address the findings. In the former DRDLR, the APP of 2014/15 simply noted the department's intention to strengthen its participation in the NEP and conduct comprehensive internal evaluations of its own (DRDLR, 2014: 6). In the subsequent APPs, there was no mention of how the department responded to the evaluations.

The Guidelines for Implementation of the Revised Framework for Strategic Plans and Annual Performance Plans, which require departments to conduct internal and external evaluations, have been used to inform the strategy of the new department (DALRRD) made up of the former DAFF and DRDLR. However, DALRRD's latest strategic plan does not refer to how it addresses findings from previous evaluations (DPME, 2019:34). This is indicative of a significant gap and weakness in the use of evaluation to inform departmental strategic planning.

The lack of the use of evaluations in planning in the former national agricultural departments was also confirmed by the participants in the semi-structured interviews. In particular, NME001 Transcript (2021) and NME002 Transcript (2021) confirmed that the evaluations were not used in the strategic planning process. The misalignment between strategic planning and evaluations in the national agricultural departments was in part because the departmental strategic planning unit did not participate in the evaluations (NME001, 2021:3). While PPM004 Transcript (2021) argued that the evaluation recommendations do not necessarily have to be included in planning documents because

they are operational, he also confirmed that the strategic planning unit did not participate in the evaluations. However, it is imperative that strategic planning units participate in evaluations to ensure that when they facilitate departmental planning, they ensure that evaluations are used. In fact, the DPME Evaluation Guideline 2.2.16 of 2015 makes clear provision for the strategic planning unit to be part of the DEWG aimed at guiding the practice of evaluations in each department.

In contrast, the WCDoA's strategic plans and APPs demonstrated comprehensively how evaluations had been used to inform planning. For instance, in the development of the 2015-2021 strategic plan, the department conducted an evaluation of the service needs of the various categories of farmers with the intention to determining the core purpose of Western Cape (WC) farmers, their desired outcomes and what services they required from the department (WCDoA, 2015:32). This evaluation and others, including the Market Access Programme evaluation, which formed part of the current research, were demonstrably used in the Strategic Plan 2015-2021. Similarly, in the development of the Strategic Plan 2020-2025, the department used all its evaluations to inform the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis.

Furthermore, the WCDoA conducted an internal audit to determine whether the recommendations of the evaluations were implemented. The following was noted by a participant:

Yes, we did an internal audit process of application of recommendations, and we had about 90% of the recommendations of those [evaluations] audited actually implemented (PME001 Transcript, 2021).

The WCDoA is one of the departments that have mechanisms in place to monitor and report on the uptake of evaluations. In the section on existing evaluation utilisation systems, this matter will be explored further. At this point, what is important is to note that all participants from the WCDoA indicated that evaluations were used, and this was supported by an internal audit report that indicated that 90% of the recommendations were used.

Another indicator of whether departments use evaluations in planning is the MPAT, which is essentially a self-assessment tool that enables managers to test their own management practices, compare them to others and identify management practice improvements that will enable them to improve service delivery (Presidency 2012:11). The MPAT is designed to assess compliance and the quality of management practices in four key performance areas, namely (a) strategic management; (b) governance and accountability; (c) human resources and systems management; and (d) financial management (Presidency 2012:11).

The self-assessment, which is done according a set of standards, is rated according to four levels ranging from non-compliance to legal or regulatory requirements to full compliance and completing tasks smartly (Presidency 2012:12). The results of the MPAT 2017 for DAFF also pointed to weakness in using evaluation for planning. For instance, while DAFF scored a compliant score of three on the integration of evaluations, it was found to be non-compliant to legal or regulatory requirements and standards for the planning of the implementation of programmes (DAFF, 2017). This essentially suggests that guidelines for the planning of new implementation programmes were not followed, hence the notable lack of incorporation of evaluations in strategic plans and APPs.

The review of departmental planning documents and the responses from officials of the former national departments confirms that evaluations were not used in the planning process. The WCDoA was the only department that demonstrated comprehensively how evaluations were used in the strategic planning. This suggests that evaluations were used inadequately, partially and anecdotally in the agricultural sector with the exception of the WCDoA, which was the only department that demonstrated how evaluations were used. This conclusion is based on the responses of the interviewees and the review of the implementation of MIPs and departmental planning documents.

7.3 Evaluation Utilisation Barriers

Since it has been established that evaluations were inadequately used in the agricultural sector, it becomes important to identify the barriers to the use of evaluations. This is in

line with the research objective “to identify the barriers to the use of evaluations in the South African public service focusing on the agricultural sector”. Accordingly, participants in the semi-structured interviews were asked to indicate barriers to the use of evaluations.

At least 31 barriers were identified in the responses to this question. However, some of the barriers overlapped, as they related to the same theme, while others were mentioned without strong substantiation. In order to organise their presentation and facilitate a more logical discussion, these barriers were clustered into relevant categories. For instance, all issues that related to the budget, whether they involved a lack of funds or how budget decisions were made, were clustered in the category “budget constraints”. The categories were also further clustered according to Cousins and Leithwood’s (1986) two major categories of factors that may affect use, namely (a) evaluation implementation (the evaluation process) factors and (b) decision or policy setting (organisational context) factors. Table 7.2 below summarises the barriers to the use of evaluations.

Table 7.2: Evaluation Utilisation Barriers

Evaluation Implementation Factors	Decision Making or Policy Setting Factors
Programme design, no theory of change, no correct description of the programme	Budget constraints
Lack of data	Negative attitude and perception about the evaluation
Inadequate Evaluation Questions	Inconsistent PM participation and ownership of the evaluation
Irrelevant recommendations	Weak evaluation support structures
Subjectivity	Lack of accountability for evaluation use
Too many recommendations	Political priorities
	Lack of integration of evaluation system with government systems
	Inadequate evaluation champion

Source: Semi-structured interview transcripts, 2021

7.3.1 Evaluation Implementation Factors

Evaluation implementation factors are barriers to the use of evaluation. These are related to the actual process of evaluation and include a lack of a theory of change; lack of data; inadequate evaluation questions; irrelevant recommendations; subjectivity; and the number of recommendations.

(a) No Theory of Change

The first evaluation implementation barrier is the lack of a theory of change or a correct description of the programme. This challenge arises primarily because most programmes were not designed according to a theory of change (NPM002 Transcript, 2021). While a programme description can be reconstructed by the evaluator and the steering committee, it requires people who have a sound background of the basis of the programme and its implementation. In some of the evaluations, evaluators struggled to obtain a coherent description of the policies and programmes that were being evaluated because there were no people “*who could provide a coherent sense of how the programme was to be implemented*” (SP001 Transcript, 2021).

The absence of a clear and sound theory of change is a serious limitation to the evaluation of a programme. For instance, how can it be determined whether the evaluation is asking the right questions when the programme and its underlying assumptions cannot be established? An evaluation that is conducted without a theory of change may result in irrelevant findings. As demonstrated by the responses from participants, a lack of a theory of change affects the use of an evaluation in a negative way.

(b) Lack of Data

The evaluation process is significantly hampered by a lack of data about the implementation of the pertinent programmes (NME002 Transcript, 2021; PPM004 Transcript, 2021; SP002 Transcript, 2021). A lack of data is due to reporting being neglected during the implementation of the programme; no data management systems in the departments; and insufficient cooperation from programme staff (NPM002 Transcript,

2021; NPM005 Transcript, 2021). In some instances, the lack of data resulted in changes to the type of evaluation. This was noted by NPM005 Transcript (2021):

Initially the Minister requested that we do an impact evaluation. Once we discussed it with DPME, we realized that because you need baseline information for an impact evaluation, and we did not have that in place, and it would take longer than just a year. It was then decided that we will do an implementation evaluation.

The absence of people with a good knowledge of the programme and the lack of data are partly the result of taking too long to evaluate a programme. A participant observed the following:

One of the problems was we were evaluating a period and I can't remember exactly, but I seem to recall that it went back at least 10 years, the timeframe was about 10 years. So, the claims that were 10 years old were quite difficult to track down the beneficiaries and to really drill down into (SP002 Transcript, 2021).

This demonstrates the challenges particularly around data that can be experienced because of the lapse of too much time from inception of the programme intervention to the evaluation.

Without information to reconstruct a programme description and no data on the implementation of a programme, an evaluation faces serious limitations. The challenge to use is that if the evaluand does not have a theory of change, and it cannot be correctly reconstructed, the quality and relevance of the evaluation may be adversely affected. The evaluations can easily come up with findings and recommendations that are inappropriate or out of context as noted earlier.

This is most likely to debilitate the use of the evaluation. In addition, both the inadequate quality of evaluation questions and irrelevance of recommendations are noted as barriers to the use of evaluation in the literature, as indicated in the sections below (Cousins & Leithwood, 1986:332; Weiss, 1972).

(c) Inadequate Evaluation Questions

Inadequate evaluation questions have also been identified as a barrier to the use of evaluations. In particular, one of the participants noted that although the questions that emanated from the ToR were important, they were not necessarily always the most useful and actionable questions (SP001 Transcript, 2021). The participant explained as follows:

I felt like those five national evaluation plan evaluations, they were quite useful, but they didn't ask all the right questions (SP001 Transcript, 2021)

If an evaluation does not ask the right questions, it may come up with findings and recommendations that are of no use.

The importance and centrality of appropriate evaluation questions to the usefulness of an evaluation cannot be overemphasised. For this reason, Step 7 of the UFE approach is dedicated to formulating priority evaluation questions and criteria for good UFE questions (Patton, 2012). In addition, recognising the importance of evaluation questions, a number of organisations have developed checklists or tools to help develop adequate evaluation questions.

Nevertheless, it was noted in Chapter 4 that in the South African context, a practical challenge is that evaluation questions are determined before commissioning an evaluator. This leaves the appointed evaluator with little or no room at all to work with the steering committee (PIUs) to refine or refocus evaluation questions. It is for this reason that there is a need the steering committee to include an external evaluation expert, who will assist it in developing good quality UFE questions.

Both the lack of data and inadequate evaluation questions also point to the weaknesses in the capacity of the state. In terms of data, there is no sufficient reporting and recording of the programme data. In other instances, even if data is collected there is inadequate data management systems that enable regular access to programme data irrespective of the turnover of the programme staff. In relation to evaluation questions, there seems to be lack of technical capacity to develop evaluations questions that will result in useful and

actionable recommendations. This exacerbated by the fact that the evaluation questions are developed before an evaluator is appointed. Hence, the proposition that there should steering committee must include an evaluation expert who serve as a technical resource person ensuring the that the evaluation (including evaluation questions) is framed in useful manner.

(d) Irrelevant Recommendations

Participants indicated that at times, evaluations were not used because there were irrelevant recommendations and often too many. Interviewees felt that sometimes recommendations were not used because they were not properly aligned with the programme, or were just too difficult for the department to implement (PPM001 Transcript, 2021; NPM001 Transcript, 2021; EE002 Transcript, 2021). This is underscored by the fact that recommendations had not taken the context of the programme into consideration (EE002 Transcript, 2021). The issue of relevance is also identified in the literature as one of the factors that may affect the use of an evaluation (Cousins & Leithwood, 1986:332; Johnson *et al.*, 2009).

In the context of evaluations conducted in the agricultural sector, this barrier arose because of the way the evaluations were conducted (process). In terms of the process, evaluators made findings and recommendations independently and then presented them to the steering committee in what can be described as a validation workshop (SP002 Transcript, 2021). In this regard, participant SP002 Transcript, 2021 had the following to say:

By working with the programme managers and presenting our recommendations, getting their insight, and seeing how feasible those recommendations are, if not feasible, how we can make them feasible was an important part of this evaluation (SP002 Transcript, 2021).

While the validation workshop was meant to bring alignment between the evaluation team and the PIUs, the process was not understood and undertaken in this way across the board.

In some instances, a validation workshop was not held at all. This was confirmed by a participant who noted that sometimes recommendations were not implemented for the following reasons:

People do not go through that process of saying, 'you made the recommendation, but we do not agree with the recommendation for various reasons' (PME001 Transcript, 2021).

Therefore, in this case the report was finalised without the input of the PIUs regarding the evaluation.

The other challenge is the inconsistent participation of programme managers throughout the evaluation process which is discussed in section 7.3.2 (c) below. Suffice to note that programme managers are very key PIUs whose effective input can ensure that the evaluation questions and recommendations are relevant and useful to the programme.

(e) Subjectivity

In other cases, the validation process undertaken in such a way that it lends itself to subjective dismissal of recommendations. This limitation can be found in the following description of the process by another participant:

So what happens is, when the service provider makes the recommendations, the first part of our management improvement plan is the acceptance of those recommendations. So, we say "yes, you made five recommendations. We accept one, three, four and five of your recommendations. We accept those and we will implement them. However, we do not accept the two." When we do not accept a recommendation, we must provide a very clear motivation of why that recommendation is not accepted" (PME001 Transcript, 2021).

In essence, the above observation suggests that departments "reserve the right to agree or disagree with the recommendations of that report" (PME001 Transcript, 2021). In this

process, the department would receive the report, decide with which recommendations it agreed and explain away those with which it did not agree. The implication of the different interpretations of the validation process is that there is no uniform way of dealing with recommendations, which provides an opportunity for evaluation be treated with contempt.

For instance, it was noted elsewhere that PMs tend to participate mostly at the end of the process, when findings are discussed, which results in contestation of the findings. One of the participants noted the following:

In spite of the finding been very clear, they chose not to agree. They challenge the findings you know... they do not agree with the finding. I think that's one issue when someone does not agree with the finding then they will obviously not agree with the recommendation” (NME001 Transcript, 2021).

According to a participant, apart from disagreeing with sound findings and recommendations, PMs tended to select recommendations based on their particular preferences:

The programme managers selectively choose the recommendations which they admire, which they agreed with” (NME001 Transcript, 2021).

This meant that PIUs were passive observers of the evaluation, comforted by the fact that whatever the evaluation found or recommended was not cast in stone. They had a window to agree or disagree with the recommendation. Furthermore, there was not much value attached to agreeing with the recommendations. As noted by another participant:

But there's always this thing that we need to agree on recommendations. We don't always have to agree on recommendations” (NPM001 Transcript, 2021).

This practice also limited the extent to which the evaluation could be used. Without PIUs and PMs working together to come up with usable findings, the chances of use were curtailed already. This suggests that such a practice would result in evaluators making findings and recommendations without the programme staff placing certain aspects into

context; hence, they would be misaligned or irrelevant to the programme. There would be limited interaction between evaluators and the steering committee (PIUs) in the determination of the recommendations of an evaluation. In addition, what would happen if management did not agree with all the recommendations? The evaluation would have been a useless exercise. However, if evaluations were conducted collaboratively with the evaluator, as envisaged by the UFE approach, the issue of agreeing or disagreeing with recommendations would not arise. The evaluator and the PIUs would have worked together to come up with useful and actionable recommendations that would not require another process of deciding on their adoption.

(f) Too many recommendations

Another related issue was that the evaluations were not used because there were too many recommendations (PME001 Transcript, 2021). This suggests that a long list of recommendations is most likely to result in weak uptake, as there are always competing priorities in an organisation. While there is no rule on the appropriate number of recommendations, one of the participants believed that *“anything more than five recommendations is a waste of time”* (PME001 Transcript, 2021). The important point here is that in order to facilitate uptake of the recommendations and use of the evaluation, it is best to come up with a few very important and actionable recommendations.

Point of departure

The process barriers discussed above also point to the limited capacity of the state to plan and implement evaluations (theory of change; sound evaluation questions; relevant and actionable recommendations). They also come as result of the non-participation of some of the PIUs throughout the value chain of the evaluation process. This point is elaborated further in 7.3.2 (c).

7.3.2 Decision-Making or Policy Setting Factors

Decision-making or policy setting factors are barriers to the use of evaluation. These include budget constraints; negative perceptions and attitudes about evaluations; the inconsistent participation of programme managers in the evaluation; weak evaluation support structures; a lack of accountability; political priorities; a lack of integration of evaluation system with government systems; and an inadequate evaluation champion.

(a) Budget Constraints

The unavailability of a budget was the most cited barrier to the use of evaluation amongst the key informants of the research. In response to the question about barriers to the use of evaluations, a participant remarked as follows:

So in areas where recommendations were not implemented, it was mostly due to budget constraints because some of the recommendations required additional funding from maybe National Treasury, which was not received to, to implement those recommendations (DME001 Transcript, 2021).

The same sentiment was shared by four other participants. However, in addition to the issue of a budget, departmental capacity to implement the recommendations was identified as a barrier (NPM004 Transcript, 2021; EE002 Transcript, 2021). Some participants indicated that at times, evaluations were not used because the department did not have capacity (human resources) to do so.

Budget constraints, as identified by the participants, might have been problematic on at least three grounds. Firstly, it has been demonstrated that departments are not including evaluations in their strategic plan and APPs. Therefore, it is inconceivable that NT would fund programmes or interventions that are not in the performance plans of departments. Secondly, most of the recommendations from the reviewed studies did not really require funding because most of them recommended a few different ways to improve a programme or, at best, recommended structural changes to a programme. These

recommendations required decision-making rather than resource allocation. Thirdly, it will be demonstrated later that the evaluation timetable was not aligned with the budget cycle.

Nonetheless, assuming that the budget issue indicated by the participants was a legitimate constraint indicates that departmental staff did not work with the evaluator to come up with sound, useable or actionable recommendations. It is pointless to make a wish list of recommendations that do not consider the availability of resources in the organisation. This is in contrast to the UFE approach, which requires the evaluator and the PIUs to work together in interpreting findings and deriving recommendations in line with the intended uses (Ramirez & Brodhead, 2013:66; Patton, 2013:14). This means that recommendations should be developed according to how they will be used. In this way, only actionable recommendations will be made.

(b) Negative Perceptions and Attitudes about Evaluations

It has been indicated in Chapter 4 that management support is key to the use of evaluations (Preskill *et al.*, 2003). Therefore, it is not surprising that participants revealed that one of the debilitating factors in the agricultural sector, particularly at the national level, was that PMs particularly did not embrace evaluations as a mechanism to improve service delivery. Instead, there was a negative perception of evaluations as a form of punishment, a means of exposure or a witch-hunt, which could become an excuse to allocate resources elsewhere, or for someone else to take the position or opportunities that might arise in a department (EE003 Transcript, 2021; EE004 Transcript, 2021). Therefore, evaluations were seen as scrutiny, and as participant NPM004 (Transcript, 2021) asked, “*Who wants to be scrutinised?*” Evaluations should not be seen as a threat but rather as an opportunity, which could potentially bring about positive change and improve the implementation of a programme.

These negative attitudes might have been in part because of PMs who (and departmental practices that) tend to personalise or programmatise evaluations. PMs might personalise evaluations because they claim ownership of the programme. A participant stated the following:

(They think that) this programme is their own at the expense of the programme being for the departmental programme (NME001 Transcript, 2021).

At the same time, departments might tend to look at evaluations as an issue of a relevant programme, rather as an organisational matter. This approach might reinforce the personalisation of evaluations by PMs. This was indicated by a participant:

If they give recommendation in terms of a certain programme, I think managers within those programmes think it's about them, you know people start looking at it as if the recommendation was saying they did not do it, they did something wrong (NME002 Transcript, 2021)

This was also confirmed by one of the programme managers who noted the following:

Sometimes management takes it personally, because obviously it is true. It goes back to their performance and all of that kind of ...it has lots of other implications (NPM003 Transcript, 2021).

Part of the problem might be that PMs may play a limited role in the planning phase of an evaluation (identification of evaluands and the initial process of determining the terms of reference). This is demonstrated by the fact that in response to the question that asked why a decision was taken to evaluate a particular programme, no one replied that it was decided or requested by the PM. The most cited reason for evaluation was a demand from a political head (a minister, a premier or the Cabinet). In the administration, the demand for evaluation was primarily driven by the DPME and the departmental M&E unit had to respond to this demand. Extraordinarily, in the WCDoA, the evaluations were largely driven by the HoD, who made sure that evaluations were consistently conducted, discussed and used (PPM001 Transcript, 2021).

(c) Inconsistent Participation of Programme Managers in the Evaluation

Although this was not the case with provincial evaluations, PMs were reported to have fully participated in only two of the six national evaluations in the study. In the other four evaluations, their participation was described as inadequate, inconsistent and limited (DME001 Transcript, 2021; (NME001 Transcript, 2021). The first area of concern was poor participation in the planning phase of the evaluation. In a process whereby DPME invited departments to submit proposed programmes for the national evaluation plan, PMs often left the process to M&E units that had to respond to the demand for the evaluation of their programmes. A participant made the following observation:

My experience is that in most cases even though the call would also be shared with the programme, it was like M&E was the one that was deemed appropriate of it to respond to the call (DME001 Transcript, 2021).

Furthermore, in one of the evaluations, a participant noted that the initial stage was led by the M&E unit, as PMs were hesitant to participate, until the DPME intervened (NME001 Transcript, 2021). However, the initial or planning phase is the most critical stage, as an evaluation has to be conceptualised in terms of key questions and purpose.

Another issue was that even when PMs were finally brought on board, there was poor or inconsistent attendance of the evaluation steering committee. Participants mentioned the following:

Managers were not consistently attending... you know. They kept on sending a representative on their behalves (NME001 Transcript, 2021).

You will find different people attending different meetings. So, you end up not having consistent attendance or participation throughout the evaluation (DME001 Transcript, 2021).

Inconsistent attendance by PIUs, who are important in the process, would affect the shape, findings and recommendations of an evaluation. Their participation is meant to

ensure that evaluation is focused on real issues; that findings are sensible and contextual; and that recommendations are actionable.

One of the reasons why irrelevant recommendations and budgetary constraints were reported as barriers to the use of evaluation could be that important intended users of the evaluation (PMs) were not part of the process of the evaluation. This is demonstrated by the following observation:

You find maybe the DDG themselves will only attend the last meeting where the evaluation results may be presented to the steering committee. And in that case, you find people now starting to defend the programme or personalizing, you know the ... or taking personally the findings of the evaluation because they were not part of the process throughout” (DME001 Transcript, 2021).

In a context like this, it is highly unlikely that an evaluation would be used.

There was a contrasting practice as far as provincial evaluations are concerned in terms of both the attitudes and participation of PMs. In the WCDoA and GDARD, participants indicated that PMs were actively engaged in all aspects of the evaluation process:

(In the WCDoA), the management of the evaluation, the determination of its parameters and the finalisation of the research questions are placed in the hands of the official responsible for the intervention to be evaluated (WCDoA, 2015: 25).

This would have ensured that there was ownership of the evaluation by the PMs. The practice and positive attitude towards evaluation was also confirmed by a PM in the WCDoA who noted the following:

I think we got to understand the role of evaluations in this Department, and we got to understand also the value that ...I mean that it adds to actually what we are doing (PPM003 Transcript, 2021).

Even a service provider who had done an evaluation with the WCDoA corroborated that PMs were willing to make the most of the feedback that is given, even if they were not

used to obtaining findings that presented both the successes and challenges (EE004 Transcript, 2021). This attitude was contrary to the picture painted above in relation to national evaluations.

The same was observed regarding the participation of PMs in the evaluation in GDARD, as noted by one of its PMs:

Within the Department we formed that committee where we were making sure that evaluation happens, coordinating the evaluation with the researchers until to the end (PPM004 Transcript, 2021).

Similarly, counterparts from the WCDoA indicated that PMs participated in the development of the ToR, appointment of the evaluator and the actual evaluation process. This was indeed confirmed by an official responsible for coordinating the evaluations and a service provider who did work in the WCDoA (PPM001 Transcript, 2021; EE004 Transcript, 2021). Clearly, the attitude of PMs towards evaluations in the provinces differed from those at the national sphere.

(d) Weak Evaluation Support Structures

The empirical study indicated that another weakness of the system, which results in poor uptake, is the effectiveness of the departmental structures that are mandated to support evaluations. In particular, national departments have M&E and strategic planning units both of which play important roles in evaluations. It has already been pointed out that M&E units have been central in the planning of evaluations in terms of developing concept notes and placing programmes in the national evaluation plan. However, beyond the planning of the evaluation, the units have not been effective in ensuring the use of evaluations (NPM003 Transcript, 2021). Other weaknesses, such as the formulation of good UFE questions have been raised earlier. In addition, the study indicated that there were varying capacities in the units, with some people having the necessary skills and experience, while others did not.

Apart from what appears as capacity issues, the ineffectiveness of M&E units might also have to do with the level or line of reporting. This point was made by one of the participants:

But I think the other issue again was the authority. Lack of authority that was given to monitoring which I was leading... in many times because they are the programme managers... as much as I am the one who was coordinating, drafting everything that needs to be developed, but because of their seniority ...you know in government people are rank conscious ... because of their seniority... because some of those officials will be fully fleshed chief directors. In some instances, others will be at the level of DDG's, and I was just a director (NME001 Transcript, 2021).

Furthermore, a lower-level M&E unit, or M&E unit that does not report to the highest level, might be constrained in that it would not have a voice in critical meetings. It would not be able to place evaluations on the agenda of the top-level management of the department. This was demonstrated by a participant who lamented that because of the seniority of PMs, that lower-level M&E unit member could be excluded from meetings that discussed evaluations with the director general (DG) or minister (NME001 Transcript, 2021). However, it is at such meetings that evaluation findings and recommendations can be ventilated properly and decisions made.

Apart from structural constraints, another weakness of lower-level M&E units might be that they tend to focus on monitoring and reporting, thus neglecting evaluations. This point is made by a participant:

The evaluation was housed within the monitoring unit and quite a huge chunk of our time was given to the reporting, in year reporting. And, you know how much time it requires (NME002 Transcript, 2021).

The reporting requirements of government are onerous and require a lot of time. If a unit does not have sufficient human resources dedicated to evaluations alone, the demand for monitoring and reporting will be prioritised. This is because reporting is time-bound and compliance-based, while evaluations can be done at any time. Nonetheless, the

important point to note is that one of the weaknesses of the M&E unit as a system to support evaluations might be constrained by its focus on monitoring and reporting, as indicated by some of the participants during the interviews.

Another departmental structure key to the use of evaluations is the strategic planning unit, which often stands alone or is independent of the M&E unit. This structure is responsible for developing the performance plans of a department, such as the strategic plan, the APP and the operational plan. The strategic planning unit is most suited to ensuring that plans are based on evaluation evidence and that the department responds to the findings and recommendations of an evaluation. However, a significant weakness might be that it may hardly participate in the evaluation process (does not sit on the steering committee). In all the 7 evaluations that excluded the WCDoA, participants indicated that the strategic planning unit did not participate in the evaluation. This is captured by the following remark:

I think one of the key issues that led to this thing not to be implemented again, was the role which our strategic planning was playing in this evaluation. They were really playing a very passive role. They were not... It's like they were not appreciating, they were not aware about the critical role which they have to play (NME001 Transcript, 2021).

In contrast, because of the central role that the strategic management unit plays in the WCDoA, evaluations have been extensively used in the planning processes. It was demonstrated earlier how the WCDoA used evaluation evidence to conduct SWOT analyses, for example, as the basis of the strategic planning process. Thus, the findings of the empirical study presented a compelling case for the participation of the strategic planning (management) unit in the evaluation process.

(e) Lack of Accountability

A lack of accountability or implementation of MIPs emerged as one of the barriers to the use of evaluations, particularly at the national level of government. As remarked by one of the participants, evaluations were not used because of the following:

Lack of authority or lack of interest, or not having processes of holding the programme managers accountable for the performance result of the programme... we never had a decisive management which could be able to hold people... accountable (NME001 Transcript, 2021)

Another example of a lack of accountability was that the implementation of MIPs was not always ensured. It has already been noted that while MIPs are developed, they are hardly monitored, and there is no progress report on their implementation. According to a participant, part of the problem is as follows:

The progress against the improvement plan needs to be in people's performance agreements, but it is not. It needs to be in the DG's performance agreement, but it is not (EE001 Transcript, 2021).

If departments have poor accountability mechanisms, oversight bodies might close this gap. However, in the case of evaluations, there is not much interest from oversight bodies, such as Parliament or AGSA, in investigating how departments have used them. While the AGSA audits the performance information of a department, this does not ensure that evaluation evidence has been used in the development of plans and the allocation of resources. Similarly, departments hardly make presentations to Parliament on what evaluation evidence they have and what they have done with it.

However, given the compliance culture of the public service, it would be difficult to ensure the use of evaluations without any form of accountability mechanisms in place. Thus “*there is a need to institutionalise more accountability*” in order to ensure that evaluations are used (EE001 Transcript, 2021). This has to be done both internally in the department and by oversight bodies external to the department.

(f) Political Priorities

In the discussion about the literature on possible barriers to evaluation utilisation, it was noted that “some policy positions are ‘data proof’ or ‘evidence proof’ because their evidence base has been narrowed and buttressed by political commitments that are

linked to values and ideological positions of political leaders and parties” (Head, 2008:5). This means that irrespective of evidence emerging from evaluation or research, certain positions will be maintained anyway, owing to political considerations.

Similarly, in the empirical study, this emerged as one of the barriers to the use of evaluations. For example, a participant observed the following:

There's politics involved in that, you know, the ANC is invested in a particular narrative or invested in a particular issue. So therefore, the politicians that get put in government would also be invested in particular interventions (EE002 Transcript, 2021).

Other participants stated as follows:

Policymakers make decisions to go ahead with certain interventions that are common sense, well established, and politically desirable, such as microfinance (SP001 Transcript, 2021).

Next year, they'll renew the policy and that they'll be doing more of the same (SP001 Transcript, 2021).

In light of these remarks, it is suggested that to enhance use implementation evaluations that asks useful questions about programme improvement be prioritised. Potentially, evaluation findings that respond to immediate needs may be more likely to be used. This depends obviously on other factors such a buy-in from the implementers (PMs).

In addition, because of their limited lifespan in office, politicians are under pressure to deliver quickly. In South Africa, a politician is elected to a five-year term, while ministers who are political HODs, serve at the behest of the President. This means that apart from the short term in office, there is always a risk that a minister may change position at any time, owing to a Cabinet reshuffle. Understandably, political representatives then focus on the most easily achievable tasks, in an attempt to create a legacy in a department or sector. In this respect, participants had the following to say:

They want to be seen to be effective in a very short space, span of time, which is like four years, five years in fact is like three years (EE002 Transcript, 2021).

Evidence can easily be marginalised for the quick fixes. For the things that shows quick results (EE002 Transcript, 2021).

These remarks indicate how evaluation recommendations might be used selectively, with those that can provide immediate results prioritised.

(g) Lack of Integration of the Evaluation System with Government Systems

The lack of integration of the evaluation system with other government systems was also identified as a barrier to the use of evaluations. A participant argued as follows:

My general view would be that evaluations are widely underutilised and underappreciated in part because we have not gotten the effective integration as part of a policy-strategy-planning-monitoring-reporting-evaluations cycle (EE004 Transcript, 2021).

The issue of integration is important because evaluations should be used in other areas of governance, such as budgeting, policy development and performance management. If they are conducted in isolation, there will be limited chances that they will be used. Currently, there is insufficient integration between the evaluation system and other systems of government. This is confirmed by a participant who argues as follows:

But, this is where I think the tool itself as is currently designed in the South African Evaluation System has its limitation, is that it was designed as a stand-alone tool. It stood outside of the national planning systems. It stood outside of performance review systems. It stood outside of any other government systems of governance. (EE002 Transcript, 2021).

One of the key areas of weakness is that the evaluation system or processes are not aligned with the budget process of government. This point is made clearly by a participant who noted that the budget process does not do the following:

Link evaluations with the Treasury system to align the performance indicators or the performance measures at the implementation level with the performance measures that are linked to finance use, the budget cycle (EE003 Transcript, 2021).

This misalignment of evaluations and the budget system occurs at two levels, namely timing and decision-making. At the timing level, when evaluations do not follow the calendar of the budget process, the budgetary needs that arise from its recommendations will not be funded. Government follows a strict calendar or budget process, which is underscored by specific timelines. In this regard, a participant observed the following:

There's a time when we're submitting budget proposal and if something is not part of that process, it gets lost, because if it wasn't...If your implementation of your recommendation was not part of your budget proposal for the coming year, it will get lost because it will become an unfunded thing (EE002 Transcript, 2021).

In some of these cases, a department might say that the recommendations were not implemented because there were no funds or budget.

On another level, budget decision-making might not incorporate or use evaluation evidence in any meaningful way. Evaluations might not be a factor in decisions about continued funding, budget increase, or even budget cuts. A participant stated the following:

If an evaluation project or programme, for instance, is estimated at a certain amount and the evaluation says the impact and is at 20 percent, and the budget, the expenditure on that is at 90 percent, you see misalignment there? (EE003 Transcript, 2021).

The point is, irrespective of what the evaluation evidence shows about a particular programme, its funding might be sustained anyway. There might be no point where a budget of a particular programme is cut or stopped because there is evidence from an evaluation that that particular programme is not making the intended impact or that is not properly designed to achieve the intended objectives. For instance, 100% of the

recommendations made in the 10 evaluations selected for the study required some form of change in the design or delivery of the programme. However, with no progress reports on the MIP, NT would not have had any indication that the department was changing the delivery mechanism, and thus would have continued the funding. This suggests that there might indeed be weak integration between the evaluation system and the budget process.

The other area of weak integration might be between the planning cycle and evaluations. It has already been noted that the non-participation of the strategic planning unit in evaluations has resulted in poor or non-use of evaluations in developing departmental strategic and performance plans. Without belabouring the point, there might also be a disjuncture with the political planning process. Usually, when a term of government begins, planning is undertaken to incorporate the election manifesto of the ruling party in clear commitments and priorities. At this point, it is expected that certain key programmes are evaluated to ensure that the new government does not commit to and fund programmes that are not working. As part of the planning process, the required changes would be made to the programmes as required. However, as observed by a participant, the following could occur:

Instead what we kind of see is belated shifts to “okay yeah this is an important programme” and then after two year of government we get our act together and allocate the funds to undertake and implement an evaluation which concludes by the third or fourth year, and by the time we get the implementation sights we are almost on our new term of government and now the policy priority has shifted or the commitment isn’t there in the same way (EE004 Transcript, 2021).

Without an alignment between planning and evaluation, it becomes difficult to ensure that evaluations are used in an effective and meaningful way.

Government also has a performance management system, which can be used to ensure that relevant officials, such as PMs and HODs, take evaluations seriously and use them to improve departmental performance. For instance, it was noted earlier that while MIP reporting is supposed to form part of the performance agreements of DGs, it is not

happening (EE001 Transcript, 2021). The amount of resources used to conduct evaluations and the need for government to deliver better services require the leadership to be held accountable for the use of evaluations. Part of doing this is to integrate the evaluation system with the performance management system of government. This is crucial because as observed by a participant, “*government works by frameworks by rules by dictates that informs the behaviour of public servants*” (EE002 Transcript, 2021). Therefore, institutionalising accountability for the use of evaluations by integrating it with performance management is key.

(h) Inadequate Evaluation Champion

A lack of an effective evaluation champion could be a barrier to the use of an evaluation. Leviton and Hughes (1981) as well as Johnson *et al.* (2009) suggest that a factor that positively affects use is persistent advocacy by a key individual. In the research, the term “evaluation champion” is used to describe this person. In the analysis of the practice of evaluation in the agricultural sector and the empirical study, there was no clear or discernable presence of an evaluation champion, except in the WCDoA.

At the national level, the management and advocacy of evaluation appeared to be left in the hands of the M&E unit. Moreover, the DPME (2015:06) has also referred to the M&E unit as the leader and champion of the evaluation system in the department. However, the limitations of this unit’s ability to influence the practice of evaluation and ensure use have been explained in the section on weak evaluation support structures. It was demonstrated earlier that this unit is not part of decision-making structures and does not have any powers to impose accountability.

An effective champion would be somebody who has the authority to make decisions about a programme, such as a DG, and those directly responsible for it such as PMs (Green, 2005). After all, these are the actual intended users of an evaluation. If they do not champion or support an evaluation, it is highly unlikely to be used. However, the role of the M&E unit is limited in this regard.

In contrast, in the WCDoA, both HODs and strong strategic management units have been very passionate evaluation champions. As a result, evaluation practice and utilisation are entrenched, and management has embraced the value that evaluations add to its work (PPM003 Transcript, 2021). The championing role of the HOD in the evaluation is described by a participant:

The HoD decides every year which programmes, services should be evaluated, and then at the HoD meeting, the HoD tells the managers your programme is next to be evaluated and then the HoD also follows through making sure that the evaluation is done (PPM001 Transcript, 2021)

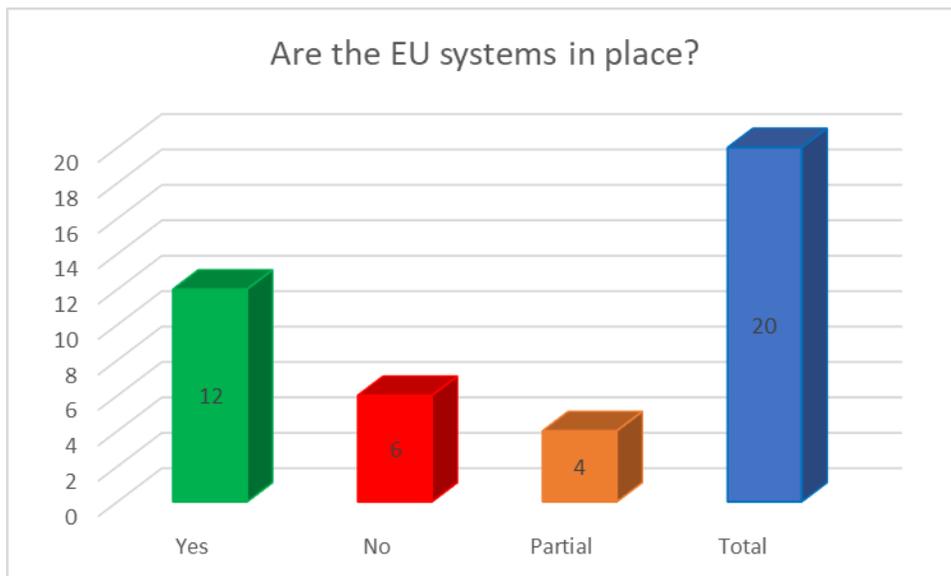
With such leadership, it is logical that there has been a significant update of the evaluation recommendations and evidence in the WCDoA. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said about evaluation practice in the national sphere of government.

7.4. Existing Evaluation Utilisation Systems

The empirical study also sought to determine if there were systems in the various departments aimed at ensuring that evaluations were used. Underscoring this objective was the need to assess whether departments agonise about the use of evaluations. Do they view use seriously enough to put mechanisms in place to ensure it? Accordingly, participants were asked whether departments had systems in place to facilitate the use of evaluations.

Figure 7.2 below presents a summary of the responses from the participants. The figure 7.2 reveals that majority of the participants (12) believed that the departments did have systems in place to ensure that evaluations were used. In contrast, six of the participants indicated that there were no systems in place to ensure that evaluations were used. At least four of the participants felt that there was some form of system (partial). In summary, most of the participants indicated that there were systems in place to ensure that evaluations were used.

Figure 7.3: Evaluation Utilisation (EU) Systems (Summary of Participants' Responses)



Source: Semi-structured interviewees transcripts, 2021

In order to test the existence of these systems further, participants were asked to provide an example or elaborate on what these systems were. In Figure 7.3 below, the mentioned systems have been categorised into (a) NES systems; (b) Departmental Systems; and (c) WCDoA systems because of the uniqueness of evaluation practice in this department.

Figure 7.4: Evaluation Utilisation Systems

NES	Departmental systems	WCDoA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voluntary participation in the NEP • MIPs • Joint funding of evaluations • Evaluation steering committee • Validation workshop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M&E units • Evaluation technical committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal audit of evaluations • Internal control unit • Management presentations on evaluations • Resource person from outside

Source: Researcher's own compilation from interview transcripts

7.4.1 NES-Related Systems

According to the participants, the NES had at least 5 elements or processes that are intended to facilitate the use of evaluations. These elements are discussed below.

(a) Voluntary Participation in the NEP

In the first place, the finding was that the system of requesting departments to identify programmes to be evaluated as part of the NEP was meant to ensure ownership. This was confirmed by a participant who noted the following:

So that was why we did the call for evaluation so that people would be proposing evaluation (EE001 Transcript, 2021)

It was expected that since these were proposed by the departments, then they would be keen to see them through and take up the findings and recommendations. However, this was not the case as indicated in the following remark:

DPME tried to tell Department what evaluations that had to be done and that did not work (EE001 Transcript, 2021).

While this practice was meant to facilitate ownership, it has been established earlier that at the departmental level, this responsibility is left to the M&E unit, instead of the actual programmes. To prove this, the description below indicates how a decision was made to evaluate a particular programme:

But because it was the only thing that we had and because it was us, monitoring, who had to fill the concept note, we just went ahead without their agreement to fill that concept note" (NME001 Transcript, 2021).

Thus, the approach did not promote ownership, and it may have resulted in findings that were not necessarily relevant for potential users, such as Cabinet, relevant political heads, strategic managers, the budget/treasury office or even programme management. In order to promote use, it is of paramount importance that different potential users are allowed an opportunity to call for evaluations or inform the evaluation agenda.

(b) Management Improvement Plan (MIP)

The MIP was indicated by the participants as another system that “*was set up to try and ensure that the evaluations were followed up*” (SP002 Transcript, 2021). However, the weaknesses of the MIP system have been widely discussed earlier. It has been established that its main weakness is that there is no monitoring and reporting on its progress or implementation. Nonetheless, the MIP is one of the systems that were put in place to ensure that there is use and, at least, that the implementation of the recommendations is followed up.

(c) Joint Evaluation Funding

The participants identified the joint funding of evaluations as another system facilitating the use of evaluations. A participant noted the following:

We did this thing of joint funding so that we would provide some funds, but the Department had to provide some funds, so they had to want to do it (EE001 Transcript, 2021).

The expectation was that since the department funds part of the cost of evaluation, it would be more interested its process and outcome. Ordinarily the department would want value for money or a good return for its investment. However, there was no evidence to show whether joint funding resulted in more uptake of evaluations or not, although participants identified it as intending to facilitate the uptake of evaluations.

(d) Evaluation Steering Committee

The NES established evaluation steering committees to enable key stakeholders (PIUs) to participate in an evaluation. It was expected that through participation in this structure, evaluations would be undertaken by PIUs in partnership with an evaluator. In this regard, a participant had the following to say:

That's why we set up the system of evaluation steering committee. So that it is implemented as a partnership (EE001 Transcript, 2021).

As professed by the UFE approach, when PIUs and the evaluator undertake an evaluation jointly, it is more likely to be used.

The participants maintained that the task of an evaluation steering committee was to develop the ToR; appoint a service provider; coordinate the evaluation; and discuss the findings (PPM004 Transcript, 2021; PPM003 Transcript, 2021; EE001 Transcript, 2021). The findings revealed that, apart from conceptualising the evaluation, the steering committee appeared to have been active mainly at two points of the evaluation, namely the initial meeting to discuss the evaluation approach and the validation workshop where evaluation findings were discussed with the evaluators. However, as discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, these committees were not involved in other steps or processes, such as determining methodology, collecting data and making the actual findings. Unlike a UFE, the evaluations experienced by the participants involved activities undertaken by evaluators alone, with findings only being discussed at the validation workshop.

According to a participant, part of ensuring use through the evaluation steering committee was making sure that it was chaired by the department (EE001 Transcript, 2021). While the composition of the steering committee varied from department to department, according to the participants, it was primarily made up of the following:

- Officials from the DPME
- Evaluators
- PMs responsible for the programme or their representatives
- Internal M&E officials
- Stakeholders from different departments
- Representatives of DALRRD (WCDoA only)
- Evaluation expert advisor (WCDoA only)

- NT (only in one evaluation)

Notable in this list of participants in the steering committee is the absence of beneficiaries. These key stakeholders could potentially enhance external accountability by ensuring that findings are known outside of the department and used. In at least 9 of the 10 evaluations selected for this study, the only participation of beneficiaries was as a source for data collection. In this respect, a participant noted the following:

The only participation for them would have been through, you know when you collect data after you have your data collection tools, you will go to them to collect data (DME001 Transcript, 2021).

Only one evaluation indicated that farmers' unions were represented in the steering committee (NME002 Transcript, 2021). In the WCDoA, farmers' representatives were provided with an opportunity to comment on the concept note and the ToR but were not otherwise involved in evaluation process (PME001 Transcript, 2021). Therefore, the findings suggest that although by all intents and purpose beneficiaries are intended users of evaluation, they have no role in determining the key evaluation questions or purpose. This is one of the weaknesses of the evaluation steering committee.

According to a participant, officials at the implementation level of the programme also played no role in the evaluation:

The implementers were also interviewed during data collection as well (DME001 Transcript, 2021).

Implementation level officials, such as extension officers, did not serve on steering committees, as noted by another participant:

But you find that many of the evaluation studies that are being conducted at the programme level, there are hardly officials who are implementers in the provincial sphere, in the municipality level who are implementing these programmes day by day. Most of them are hardly ... are mostly left out (NME001 Transcript, 2021).

At the provincial level, both GDARD and WCDoA participants indicated that implementation level officials participated in the steering committee. According to a participant, in the Mid-Term Evaluation of the Siyazondla Homestead Food Gardens Programme

The extension personnel within the department (WCDoA) were invited to be part and parcel of the committee” (PPM004 Transcript, 2021).

Given their experience and participation in the day-to-day implementation of the programme, it would be a drawback if implementation level officials were not part of steering committees. They too are the intended users of an evaluation. If the delivery mechanism of a programme changes because of the outcome of an evaluation, they are the ones who must implement the new mechanism. Their participation is key in ensuring that the right questions are asked and, most importantly, that the emerging recommendations are actionable on the ground.

The other weakness was the lack of participation of the provinces in the steering committees of national evaluations. Given that agriculture is a concurrent function of provincial and national departments, with the national department developing policies and provinces implementing them, provinces are the PIUs of a national evaluation too. However, there was limited participation by provincial officials in the evaluations that are conducted by the former national departments. In at least two national evaluations, it was indicated that only selected provinces participated (NME002 Transcript, 2021; NPM004 Transcript, 2021). Moreover, in most cases, provinces only participated as sources of data (key informants), rather than as partners and users of an evaluation. When there was provincial participation, it was limited because often only officials at the higher echelons of the department, rather than officials at the implementation level of the programme, participated in a national evaluation, as described by one of the participants:

The closest that normally happens is to get people who are at a very high level like your HoD ...your Chief Directors in provinces. But those people are not necessarily implementers at all times, and you find that the actual implementers ... even the

recommendations that are going to come forth will never be understood by them (NME001 Transcript, 2021)

It is indeed a weakness if provinces do not fully participate in national evaluations. Because of their centrality in the implementation of programmes, their effective participation in the evaluation via the steering committee would greatly enhance the uptake of evaluations in the agricultural sector.

An interesting practice was one province inviting other provincial counterparts to participate in an evaluation. According to a participant (PPM002 Transcript, 2021), in the evaluation of the LandCare Programme in the WCDoA, guests from other provinces were invited, although they did not stay for the entire process of the evaluation. Inter-provincial participation is important for the integrated use of evaluations because other provinces can learn from the experience of the evaluating province. These lessons can be used to improve programme delivery in the participating provinces as well.

The other challenge with the steering committee was the lack of “*continuity in terms of representation over the life cycle of an evaluation*” (EE004 Transcript, 2021). It was established in the discussion on the participation of PMs that, at times, they sent different representatives to the programme evaluation, or only attended the meeting that discussed findings and recommendations. In some instances, the inconsistent attendance of members of the committee led to disputes about the findings and recommendations (DME001 Transcript, 2021). Inconsistent attendance of the steering committee, particularly by people responsible for the programme (PMs) would constrain the uptake of evaluations.

(e) Validation Workshops

The study revealed that validation workshops were part of the process that sought to enhance the use of evaluations. These were probably aimed at bridging the gap between the evaluators and the steering committee (PIUs). According to a participant, in the validation workshops the evaluators should do the following:

Present the findings back to the team or the steering committee and relevant members of the evaluation. And in doing so make sure that there is alignment to what we're saying and what we have found” (SP002 Transcript, 2021).

This suggests that at these workshops, programme staff and other stakeholders are meant to advise the evaluators about the relevance and validity of the evaluation. Moreover, misunderstandings or misalignment is supposed to be ironed out. Ideally, this process would address the concerns about relevance discussed earlier and would prevent the department choosing to follow only the recommendations with which it agrees. However, it has already been noted that participants indicated that sometimes evaluations were not used because the recommendations were not relevant, out of context, too ambitious or not covered by a budget. This means that the validation process was not effectively used.

7.4.2 Departmental Systems

Apart from the systems that were part of the NES, the former DAFF and DRDLR did not establish any additional internal systems to support evaluations and their uptake. The departments at the national level simply used the minimum prescribed by the NES in the form of M&E units and the technical evaluation committees. This demonstrates that evaluations and their utilisation have not been considered very important. In contrast, the (provincial) WCDoA has used existing and additional systems to ensure that evaluations are used as shown in the section below.

(a) M&E Units

In 7.3.1 (d), the role of M&E units in the evaluations was discussed. Nonetheless, it is important to note here that the M&E unit is one of the structures established in departments to support evaluations. Most of the participants named this unit when they were asked whether departments have systems in place to ensure that evaluations are used. However, it was established earlier that in practice, the unit's limitations included the level of its establishment; its lack of authority; and its bias towards monitoring and reporting (NME001 Transcript, 2021). Furthermore, the study revealed that M&E units did

not play any active role in ensuring that evaluations were used. Instead, they were most involved in commissioning evaluations and expected PMs to adopt and implement findings.

Nonetheless, this unit is central to evaluation management and monitoring in departments. This assertion is premised on the key role that the units have played in terms of driving the process of drafting the concept notes and ToR, as well as managing the evaluation process. The listed weaknesses do not nullify the centrality of the unit but rather point to the fact that there is room for improvement to make it more effective.

(b) Departmental Evaluation Working Groups

The DPME Evaluation Guideline 2.2.16: How to develop a Departmental Evaluation Plan (2015) requires departments to establish DEWGs to oversee the evaluation system and support it across the department. DEWGs, which are made up of relevant officials, such as policy/planning unit officials, PMs, CFOs and M&E staff, are meant to develop three year departmental evaluation plans; to help programmes identify potential areas for evaluation; to develop concept notes; and to establish steering committees for the evaluations (DPME, 2015:04). DEWGs are effectively responsible for institutionalising evaluations in departments.

However, in practice, M&E units are responsible for this function, whereas steering committees manage the different evaluations. A participant indicated that only the WCDoA has an overall evaluations committee (DEWG), apart from the steering committee (PPM003 Transcript, 2021). Therefore, this suggests that in the national department, there is no central departmental structure including key role players (PIUs), who are responsible for influencing evaluation practice and evaluation uptake in the department. The steering committee is ad hoc and ceases to exist when a specific evaluation is concluded, while the DEWG is meant to permanent.

7.4.3 WCDoA Systems

The WCDoA is one department that has gone beyond the requirements of the system by using other departmental management systems to ensure the use of evaluations. The empirical study established that the following systems have been utilised: internal audit of evaluations and internal control monitoring; management presentations on evaluations; and a resource person

(a) Internal Audit of Evaluations and Internal Control Monitoring

Section 38 of the Public Finance Management Act of 1999 requires an accounting officer of a department to establish a system of internal audit and an effective, efficient, and transparent systems of internal control. Key amongst the functions of an internal audit is to assist the accounting officer in achieving the objectives of the institution by evaluating and developing recommendations for the enhancement or improvement of the processes (PFMA Regulations, 2016). In line with this provision, the WCDoA uses internal audit to audit the implementation of MIPs (agreed recommendations). This point was made by a PM:

Internal audit actually did audit us on it as well to check whether we have actually implemented what was actually promised to implement (PPM003 Transcript, 2021).

The findings of an internal audit of the implementation of recommendations in the WCDoA were also mentioned in the section on the use of evaluations.

Similarly, the internal control unit the responsibility of which is to assist the accounting officer in ensuring that departmental compliance with laws and regulations was utilised to monitor the implementation of recommendations (PPM003 Transcript, 2021). The use of existing management systems points to the seriousness with which the WCDoA approaches evaluation practice. Therefore, it is understandable that there has been a significant uptake of evaluations in this department. This is definitely a lesson about elements to be included in the adapted integrated model for the effective utilisation of evaluation.

(b) Leadership and Accountability by Management

In the section on barriers to the use of evaluation barriers, participants from the former DAFF bemoaned the lack of leadership and accountability by management. This was cited as one of the reasons why the department struggled with the uptake of evaluations. In contrast, as the study found, the management practice at the WCDoA was more receptive, understanding and keen to undertake evaluations and use them. Management accountability for evaluations was described by a participant:

We are also checked ... to report on the evaluations on a monthly basis at our management meetings. So, we actually, if you've got an evaluation being done, you report on it actually on where there is progress and actually all that kind of things (PPM003 Transcript, 2021).

It would be of great benefit if this practice of discussing evaluations at management meetings were widespread in the agricultural sector. This form of accountability would be facilitated by the existing management practice.

(c) Resource Person

The study found that another innovative feature of the practice of evaluations at the WCDoA was the use of an external expert as a resource person. This point was made by one of the participants who explained the following:

We had an advisor that has been contracted by the Department of Agriculture to oversee specifically the evaluation process (PPM002 Transcript, 2021).

The advisor provided technical assistance to the programme to develop ToR, appoint an appropriate service provider and advise on the evaluation process. This practice was similar to the recommendation in the preliminary model that departments should appoint an external advisor to support them in planning an evaluation. In particular, in the model, the envisaged advisor is meant to assist mainly with formulating the evaluation questions,

the purpose of the evaluation and the TOR, as well as ensuring the appointment of service providers who are utilisation-focused.

7.5 Summary

Given the varied practice and use of evaluation in the agricultural sector, it is important to reflect on what these differences are and how they have aided the use of evaluations. It is apparent from the analysis that in the WCDoA, the practice of evaluation is advanced, and it has demonstrated the use of evaluations in strategic planning. Central to this practice is the receptive management attitude towards evaluations; the presence of a champion of evaluations in the form of the HOD and the director of the strategic management unit; and the use of existing management systems to oversee evaluations and monitor the use of recommendations. It was noted earlier that the management of the WCDoA has embraced evaluations as a tool that can add value to its work and improve service delivery. The role of the HoD in initiating evaluations of certain programmes and following up on uptake was also reflected upon. Given the leadership and decision-making level of the HOD, this makes him/her a strategic and effective champion of evaluations. The role of the director of strategic management in planning, execution and follow-up has also been central in championing use.

Lastly, the WCDoA has used existing management structures, such as internal audit and the internal control unit effectively to monitor the implementation of evaluation recommendations. Furthermore, the structures established to support evaluation practice are adequately functional. For instance, the DEWG has been established and used to discuss the uptake of evaluations.

In contrast, findings revealed that the national departments struggled with the uptake of evaluations because they were not used to this practice. A defining issue was the negative attitude towards evaluations of PMs at the national level. Without PMs embracing and participating positively, an evaluation is unlikely to be used. There was no discernible champion for evaluations at the national level. Management structures were not used to

track the use of evaluations and the implementation of the MIP as they were in the WCDoA.

7.6 CONCLUSION

The agricultural sector is made up of DALRRD (formerly DAFF and DRDLR) and the provincial departments of agriculture. Evaluations conducted by the national departments that were reviewed in the study differed particularly from those conducted by the WCDoA. Key to the use of evaluations is management's reception of evaluations; effective evaluation support structures, such as M&E units, DEWGs and strategic planning units; and the use of existing management structures to oversee and monitor evaluation uptake. While there was evidence that evaluations in the agricultural sector were used in some form or the other, this chapter concludes that evidence from the empirical study showed that evaluations were used inadequately, partially and anecdotally in the agricultural sector, with the exception of the WCDoA.

Although the national department, particularly according to its concurrent functions, is expected to lead and guide the practice of evaluations in provinces, the best practice appears to come currently from the provincial department of WCDoA. The barriers to the use of evaluations are predominantly about the policy or decision-making setting (department), rather than the actual process of evaluation. Key to this are negative attitudes to evaluation; a lack of ownership and leadership by PMs; weak structures that support evaluation uptake; political priorities; and a lack of accountability.

Inadequate use of evaluation is due to aspects of the NES, such as voluntary participation in evaluation; MIPs; joint funding of evaluations; and validation workshops. Moreover, the study revealed that national departments did not go beyond the minimum provision of NES in developing systems for the uptake of evaluations. The only structure used at this level was the M&E units. In contrast, very useful lessons can be learned from the practice of evaluations at WCDoA where additional internal systems have been used to support evaluations. These systems, which include the use of internal audit and internal control units, management presentations on evaluations and the use of an external expert as a

resource person, are key to the adapted model to promote evaluation use that is presented in Chapter 8.

CHAPTER 8

ADAPTED MODEL TO PROMOTE THE EFFECTIVE USE OF EVALUATIONS

8.1 Introduction

In Chapter 7, the use, barriers and systems in place to promote the use of evaluations in the agricultural sector were extensively discussed in light of the empirical study. The primary research question was what can be done to promote use of evaluations in the agricultural sector? Accordingly, this chapter presents recommendations for possible solutions to the shortcomings of existing procedures and outlines an adapted model to promote the effective use of evaluations in the South African agricultural sector. This is in line with the study's objective to develop an adapted model that facilitates the use of evaluations for the South African agricultural sector.

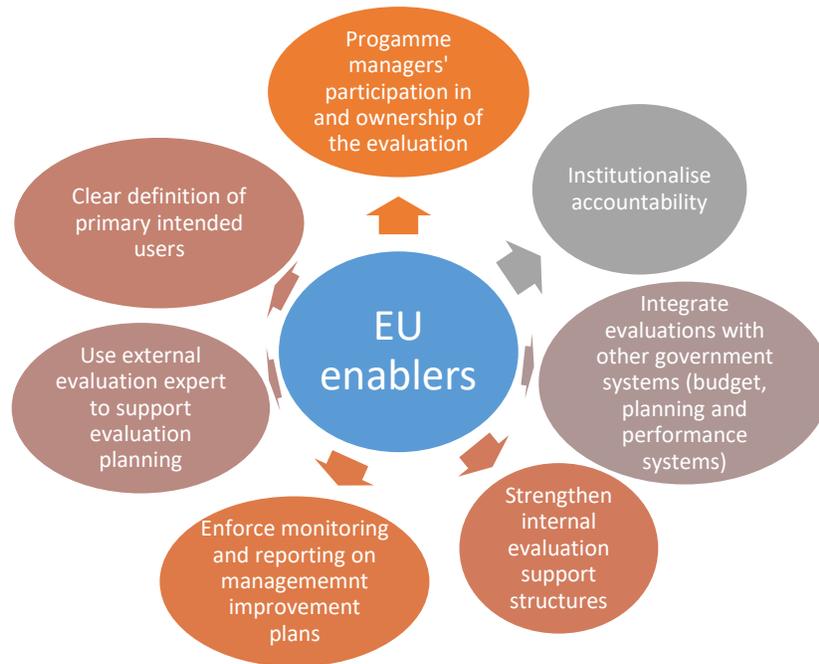
8.2. What Can Be Done to Promote Use?

The empirical study on the utilisation of evaluations in the agricultural sector was not only useful in describing the practice of evaluations and identifying the barriers to the use of evaluations but it also assisted in detecting a number of possible solutions. These possible solutions are presented in Figure 8.1 below as recommendations (referred to as evaluation use enablers). In the concluding section of this chapter, some of these possible solutions are incorporated in the adapted model and presented as part of it.

The section after the figure, explains the evaluation enablers, which are as follows:

- PMs' participation in and ownership of the evaluation
- Institutionalisation of accountability
- Integration of evaluations with other government systems
- Strengthening of internal evaluation support structures
- Enforcing of monitoring and reporting on MIPs
- Use of external expert to support evaluation planning
- Clear definition of primary users

Figure 8.1: Evaluation Utilisation Enablers



Source: Researcher's own depiction

8.2.1 Programme Managers' Participation and Ownership of the Evaluation

The Achilles heel of the use of evaluation is PMs' participation in and ownership of evaluations. There is no doubt that without the buy-in, commitment, support and participation of PMs, the evaluation is most unlikely to be used. In Chapter 7, it was established that PMs' ownership of and participation in the evaluations are weak. Therefore, what can be done to ensure that they participate in and own the evaluation? At the heart of the solution is striking a balance between changing the departmental evaluation culture so that PMs can recognise the value of evaluations and the implementation of accountability mechanisms.

8.2.1.1 Changing Departmental Evaluation Culture

(a) Change Management

As proposed in Chapter 3, there is a strong case for a change management process aimed at creating a culture of evaluations and their use in the agricultural

sector. This process must target middle and senior managers to ensure appreciation for evaluations and their role in policymaking or programme performance improvement. The empirical study highlighted the negative attitude towards evaluations of PMs. It was observed that PMs, particularly at the national level, see evaluations as some kind of punishment or means of exposure, and they personalise evaluation findings. In addition, PMs' participation in and ownership of the evaluation process are inadequate (EE003 Transcript, 2021; NME001 Transcript, 2021). Basically, PMs do not appreciate the value of the contribution of evaluations to service delivery and programme improvement.

To change this type of attitude and thinking will require an exercise that engages the relevant management levels in a process (change management) to understand and appreciate the purpose of evaluation. This process should focus on identifying the source of negative attitudes and possible solutions. Without changing the attitudes of management towards evaluations, evaluation use is unlikely to happen in any meaningful way.

(b) Voluntary Participation in Evaluations

It emerged in the empirical study that while the NES expects PMs to identify and propose programmes for evaluation, sometimes the M&E unit does this on their behalf (NME001 Transcript, 2021). As argued in Chapter 7, PMs are most likely to participate in and own an evaluation when it is not imposed on them. This assertion assumes that once the change management process makes PMs appreciate the value of evaluation, they will readily offer programmes for evaluation, even when they know the findings will be adverse. Evaluations that are proposed and led by PMs are more likely to result in use than those imposed on them.

Nonetheless, it is not given that PMs will voluntarily submit their programmes for evaluation. Therefore, a balance must be struck between voluntarism and organisational demand for evaluations. Although in exceptional cases, the department may decide to evaluate a programme, which was not volunteered by

the relevant officials, to maximise the operational application of findings, PMs should propose programme evaluations. However, to maximise use by strategic managers or to promote accountability, at times, evaluations should be proposed by M&E units/strategic managers/ministers/portfolio committee. Even in these instances, it is important that PMs play a major and active role in the evaluation process.

8.2.2 Institutionalisation of Accountability

In Chapter 7, it was argued that the compliance culture of the public service makes it difficult to ensure the use of evaluations without any form of accountability mechanisms in place. On this basis, institutionalising accountability for evaluations is advocated as a means of promoting utilisation. At the same time, it is important to note that when evaluation becomes a compliance-driven exercise, there is a risk of malicious compliance and tendencies to go for the low-hanging fruit and achieve success easily, at the expense of using evaluations for learning and informing strategic decisions.

However, what is proposed here is not simply complying with any particular requirement. An integrated system, which achieves a balance between the process of evaluation and accountability mechanisms, will promote the use of evaluations. In particular, institutionalising accountability entails the following:

(a) Audit of Evaluations

Existing audit bodies should conduct regular audits to determine how evaluations are used to inform planning or improve organisational performance:

- AGSA annually audits the performance information of departments, including their compliance with planning and reporting frameworks. To promote the use of evaluations, this mandate should be expanded to include the determination of compliance with the planning framework requirement that evaluations must inform planning and the NES requirement that departments must report on the MIP every six months.

- Internal Audit

The practice of using internal audits to audit the implementation of evaluation recommendations is one of the key measures that have promoted the use of evaluations at the WCDoA. This best practice will greatly improve the uptake of evaluations if implemented across the sector.

- Internal Control

It was explained in Chapter 7 that all departments have internal control units, which oversee departmental compliance with policies and prescripts. This unit is also used in the WCDoA to assess the implementation of evaluation recommendations. It is recommended that this be made standard practice across the sector.

(b) Performance Agreement

Integrating evaluations into the performance management system, as discussed earlier, can also be used as a measure of accountability. Senior managers or PMs should sign a performance agreement that includes evaluations and their implementation. When their performance is assessed, they will have to demonstrate (account for) what evaluations they requested and how they responded to the evaluation findings.

(c) Evaluation-Based Budget Decisions

Using evaluations to inform budget decisions will not only integrate systems but also serve as an accountability mechanism. The use of evaluations will definitely improve when they form the basis of decisions about new or further funding of a programme. Each year or budget cycle, programmes seek to maintain current funding or gain additional financial support from the NT. Knowing that the recommendations or findings of an evaluation will be considered in making such

decisions will encourage programmes to treat evaluations more seriously and even use them.

8.2.3 Integration of Evaluations with Other Government Systems

The lack of effective integration of evaluations into policy, strategy, planning, monitoring, reporting and evaluation cycles has been identified one of the key barriers to the use of evaluations in the agricultural sector (EE004 Transcript, 2021). Currently, evaluations are anecdotally mentioned in other systems, without a clear or practical means of integration. An integrated system and practice of evaluations are key to promoting utilisation. Therefore, it is recommended that the following measures be implemented in order to enable effective integration:

(a) Planning System

It has been established in Chapter 7 that the utilisation of evaluations in the strategic planning process is inadequate, despite this being required by the planning framework. There are three measures that may result in a better or effective integration of evaluations into the planning system, namely (1) active participation of strategic planning units in the evaluation process; (2) aligning the evaluation timeframe with the planning cycle; and (3) enforcing planning framework requirements for integration.

1. Active participation of strategic planning units in the evaluation process

One of the barriers to the use of evaluations is that the units responsible for planning do not participate in the evaluation. Strategic planning units are central to ensuring that evaluation results are discussed and incorporated in the new plans of a department in line with the requirements of the planning framework of government. However, it was observed that this unit plays no role in evaluations (NME001 Transcript, 2021).

To ensure that evaluations are used effectively in the planning process by providing relevant evidence that guides planning decisions, it is recommended that

the strategic planning unit participate in the process of evaluation by having a representative in the evaluation steering committee. The strategic planning unit does not have to take a decision-making position in the steering committee, but it serves a crucial role in ensuring that evaluation questions are relevant to planning information needs and that evaluations form the basis of the planning process. Its participation will not only add value in terms of its planning perspective on the process but will also enable it to have a better understanding of the context of certain findings and recommendations.

2. Aligning the evaluation timeframe with the planning cycle

As noted in Chapter 7, the use of evaluations is also weakened by the misalignment between the evaluation timeframe and the planning cycle. While evaluations are conducted at any point in time, strategic plans are developed in line with a specific political calendar or planning cycle. Decisions about new programmes or priorities, formulated as the MTSF, are made just after elections, which begin the new five-year term of a government. It is at this point that information about which programmes work or do not work is needed, as decisions are made about priorities for the next five years.

Accordingly, it is recommended that rapid impact evaluations (summative) be conducted towards the end of a term of government to ensure that results inform new strategic plans. It is not helpful to start these evaluations in the last two quarters of the year, since the planning processes actually commences 18 months before the end of the term. Therefore, it would be useful to conduct these evaluations at the start of the fourth year of the term to be in time to inform planning. This would mean that the planning of the new government would have recent evaluation results at its disposal, which could be used to inform decisions.

Furthermore, implementation/early outcomes evaluation should be conducted in the middle of the term of government. These evaluations may be used to improve the implementation of programmes that have been operational for at least two

years. It would also be useful to conduct a design evaluation during the first year to pick up early design errors before the implementation evaluation. To decide which type of evaluation is required, it would be appropriate to consider that new programmes might benefit more from early evaluations, while more established and continuing programmes could benefit from outcome evaluations. If aimed at continuing programmes, evaluations could be commissioned early in the new implementation cycle, as data on past outcomes would be available.

These proposed timeframes would ensure that evaluation results are available at opportune moments of the planning cycle.

3. Enforcing the planning framework requirements for integration

The Guidelines for the Implementation of the Revised Framework for Strategic Plans and Annual Performance Plans require departments to ensure that evaluations inform the development of these plans. However, Chapter 7 of this dissertation demonstrated that this was not done in the national department. To improve the use of evaluations, the Guidelines should be changed to require departmental plans to have a separate (compulsory) section on evaluations (internal or external) that informed the development of the plans. In addition, it is important that this requirement be enforced through building in accountability mechanisms.

(b) Budget

It was found in Chapter 7, that there is weak alignment between evaluations and the budget process or cycle. Moreover, decisions about the funding of programmes are not informed by the outcome of evaluations.

Because the budget and planning cycles are intertwined, the same recommendation, which was made earlier concerning the timeframe, is proposed here. Apart from conducting particular evaluations when the MTSF is

formulated and in the middle of the term of government, it is important that evaluation results are available before the budgeting bidding process begins.

Against this backdrop, it is recommended that to promote the use of evaluations, the evaluation timeframe must be aligned with the budget process and that budget decisions should be informed by evaluation results. Therefore, essentially, the evaluation timeframe should be aligned to the budgeting cycle to ensure that funding decisions are based on evaluation results.

(c) Performance Management System

Another important system with great potential to ensure that PMs participate in and own evaluations is the performance management system. This system ensures that evaluations and their utilisation become part of the performance indicators of PMs. It was found in the empirical study that while the NES requires that reporting on MIPs forms part of the performance agreement of DGs, this is hardly done (EE001 Transcript, 2021). Evaluations would be taken more seriously if they have a bearing on the performance of PMs.

It is for this reason that integrating evaluations into the performance management system is recommended. In particular, it is advocated that evaluations and reporting on improvement plans should be made part of the performance agreements of all senior managers. Each year, they should, sign performance agreements based on key performance areas and priorities. The recommendation is that evaluations of PMs' programmes should be made part of the key performance areas in their yearly performance agreements. This would ensure that when their performance is assessed, the extent to which they have participated, managed and used evaluations is considered. Very often, senior managers do all they can to ensure that they receive a positive performance review. Therefore, including evaluations in their performance agreements is most likely to improve utilisation.

(d) Standard operating procedures

Key to the use and integrated practice of evaluation in the agricultural sector is the introduction of standard operating procedures (SOPs), which provide a set of detailed step-by-step instructions documenting a routine or repetitive activity so that any team member can carry out a task correctly every time (Singh, 2019; Princeton Centre, 2019). In the government environment, SOPs have been used to standardise services, training and support across multiple locations (Princeton Centre, 2019).

Introducing SOPs for evaluation in the agricultural sector will ensure that there is a standardised process across provinces and the national department. The SOPs should also be used to enhance the integration of evaluations with other systems of government by outlining evaluation timeframes that are linked to the planning and budgeting cycle of government as well as the performance management system. Broadly, the SOPs should address the following:

- How programmes are selected for evaluation
- The composition of the steering committee and the definition of stakeholders (PIUs)
- The roles and responsibilities of PMs and all key stakeholders in the evaluation
- The link between the evaluation and planning/budgeting cycles
- The basic skills of the evaluator or evaluation team, focusing on UFE skills
- The link with the performance management system (performance agreements and reviews)
- The accountability framework for evaluations
- Evaluation reporting requirements and processes as well as MIPs

8.2.4 Strengthening of Internal Evaluation Support Structures

The DEWG, the M&E unit and the strategic planning unit are the three key structures that could support the uptake of evaluations in the agricultural sector. However, the

study revealed that DEWGs were not established or functional in the national departments (DRDLR and DAFF) and the GDARD, while the M&E unit and strategic planning units had several limitations. Nonetheless, there is no doubt that strengthening these structures would go a long way towards promoting the use of evaluations.

(a) Departmental Evaluation Working Group

The DEWG is a very important departmental structure that can be used to institutionalise and promote the use of evaluations. While the DPME (2015) provides for departments to establish this structure, it is only the WCDoA that has it. The study found that in both the national departments and the GDARD, this structure was not functional. It is recommended that the current national department and each provincial department in the agricultural sector establish this and maintain an operational DEWG.

(b) Monitoring and evaluation unit

While M&E units have been central in leading the planning (concept notes, commissioning) and supporting the evaluation process, their role in promoting the use of evaluations has been weak. To promote the use of evaluations, M&E units working with HODs, DGs or PMs should conduct regular self-assessments to rate how they think they are making use of evaluations (EE004 Transcript, 2021). This information could be used to determine areas that need intervention and to promote the use of evaluations.

There is also a case for addressing the structural weaknesses of M&E units in terms of their reporting lines and human resource capacity. These units will not be represented in the decision-making structures of departments. Therefore, they will have very limited influence if they do not report, or if sufficiently senior officials do not lead them. Ideally, the heads of strategy, planning, performance and M&E should report directly to HODs and DGs.

Similarly, it is important to build the capacity of M&E units to drive the institutionalisation of the adapted UFE model by ensuring that its principles are followed during the evaluation process. In this respect, the unit should have sufficient and appropriately skilled officials, who would focus exclusively on evaluations. This would ensure that these officials are able to conduct internal diagnostic evaluations and better guide the work of DEWGs and steering committees.

(c) Strategic planning unit

The centrality of the strategic planning unit in promoting the use of evaluations was discussed widely in Chapter 7 that established that the primary weakness of this structure is its lack of participation in the evaluation process. Therefore, it is proposed that the DEWG and the steering committee must have at least one representative from the strategic planning unit, who will participate in the entire evaluation process. This will ensure that the lessons that have been learned, findings and recommendations form the basis of the strategic planning process.

8.2.5 Enforcing monitoring and reporting on management improvement plans

There is no doubt that the MIP is a very important tool in the promotion of the use of evaluations. Its proper implementation and compliance with the reporting requirements would keep departments and programmes engaged in their progress in taking up the recommendations of an evaluation. To support the enforcement of MIP progress reports (a) the performance agreements of senior managers should include the requirement to produce MIPs; (b) internal audit and internal control should audit compliance; and (c) reporting requirements must be integrated with the broader performance reporting system of government.

(a) Senior managers' performance agreement

The performance agreements of senior managers whose programmes have been evaluated should incorporate compliance with and reporting on MIPs.

When performance assessment is done, the extent of compliance and the use of evaluation should be considered.

(b) Internal audit and internal control

The internal audit bodies and internal control unit should investigate whether departments comply with evaluation reporting mechanisms. Apart from ensuring compliance, these findings should be used to hold people accountable where necessary. For instance, performance assessment of evaluation will have to be supported by a positive audit of this key performance area. Similarly, in the budget process, MIPs could be used to inform decisions about the funding of a programme.

(c) Reporting requirements

The cumbersome and daunting reporting requirements of the public sector also have an effect on the quality of compliance. The reporting system is also disintegrated, with different bodies requesting the same information from a department at multiple or different times. Therefore, it is imperative that reporting on MIPs be integrated into the quarterly or annual reporting requirements, rather than as a stand-alone or ad hoc requirement. Reporting integration will boost compliance and make it easier for the auditing and oversight bodies to track the implementation of evaluation recommendations, thereby promoting utilisation.

8.2.6 Use of External Expert

To boost the capacity of the steering committee for planning, a UFE Expert could be appointed to participate in the planning phase. This will ensure that UFE principles are sufficiently infused in the evaluation process from the beginning and that an evaluator who is competent in UFE is appointed to take the evaluation forward. This practice is already followed by the WCDoA, as noted by a participant:

They supplemented departmental capacity with head of experts who had evaluation capacity and who are long standing evaluation practitioners in South Africa. They used them effectively in a referential role to supplement what the department didn't necessarily have exposure to in terms of evaluations, certainly in terms of methodology and design. I think that kind of external input coupled with an organic demand and organisation culture that saw the value in use (EE004 Transcript, 2021)

The appointment of an external expert evaluator in the planning phase would significantly boost the use of evaluations. However, it is important to note that such an expert evaluator should subscribe to and understand UFE. He/she should not only help the department to plan quality evaluation but also ensure that it is planned in such a way that it will be used.

8.2.7 Clear Definition of Primary Intended Users

The literature review and the empirical study have shown that there is no clear definition of stakeholders (PIUs), and beneficiaries only serve as a source of information for the evaluation. Furthermore, the evaluation steering committee is often selected according to its members' position in the organisation and area of responsibility, rather than a strategic selection of PIUs of the evaluation. Accordingly, it is recommended that the selection of PIUs that will make up the steering committee should not be based solely on their position and area of responsibility but on criteria consistent with the UFE approach.

This could be achieved by developing a clear definition of a stakeholder (PIU) and criteria for his/her selection. In addition, external PIUs, such as beneficiaries or service users, should be included through proxies in the whole evaluation process, including its planning. For instance, a representative of a farmers' union should be part of an evaluation that affects a programme that serves it.

Furthermore, it is important to include service delivery officials in the evaluation, especially those from the provincial sphere, which is an implementation vehicle of the

national department. Their experience with the implementation of programmes would assist in ensuring that the evaluation asks useful questions and that its findings are in line with the context of the programme. Table 8.1 below presents a summary of the above recommendations.

Table 8.1: Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation	Key elements
1. Programme Managers Participation and Ownership of the evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process of change management aimed at creating a culture of evaluations and their use in the agricultural sector. • PMs should voluntarily propose their programmes for evaluation
2. Integration of Evaluations with Other Government Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate evaluations into planning cycle with the participation of strategic plan units; align evaluation timeframe and the planning cycle; and enforce planning framework requirements for integration • Align evaluation timeframe with budget cycle and ensure that budget decisions are informed by evaluations • Integrate evaluations into the performance management system • Introduce evaluation SOPs in the sector
3. Institutionalisation of Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AGSA, internal audit and internal control must audit evaluation utilisation and compliance with planning, budgeting and reporting requirements • Incorporate evaluations in the performance agreements of senior managers or programme managers • Evaluation-based budget decisions
4. Strengthening of Internal Evaluation Support Structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish this and maintain an operational DEWG

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M&E unit must conduct regular self-assessment to determine use; report lines must ensure access to decision-making; capacity for UFE must be built. • Strategic planning unit participation in the DEWG and evaluation steering committees
5. Enforcing Monitoring of and Reporting on Management Improvement Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate MIP reporting in senior managers' performance agreements • Audit bodies and internal control to determine compliance with MIP reporting • MIP progress reports' integration with quarterly or annual reporting
6. Use of External Expertise and Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UFE expert must be appointed to participate in the planning phase
7. Clear Definition of Primary Intended Users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a clear definition of a stakeholder and criteria for their selection based on the UFE approach. • Include beneficiaries and service delivery level officials in the evaluation steering committee

Source: Created by the researcher

8.3 Adapted Model to Promote the Use of Evaluations in the South African Agriculture Sector

The literature review on the utilisation and practice of evaluations in the South African public sector identified broad principles or key elements that should form the basis of an adapted model to promote the use of evaluations. Subsequent to an analysis of the applicability of the UFE approach to evaluations conducted in the South African public sector, a preliminary model was developed on the basis that it would be enhanced by the findings and recommendations that emanated from the empirical study. While the empirical study of the use of evaluations in the agricultural sector did not alter the fundamentals and structure of the preliminary model, it resulted in findings and recommendations that added significant value to the final model.

Accordingly, the literature review on the utilisation of evaluations, the analysis of the practice of evaluations in the South African public sector and the empirical study of the use of selected evaluations in the agricultural sector culminated what is entitled “An Adapted and Integrated Model to Promote the Use of Evaluations in the Agriculture Sector”.

8.3.1 Description of the Model

The adapted and integrated model that promotes the use of evaluation in the South African agriculture sector combined elements from the literature review, evaluation practice in the public and agricultural sector and recommendations from the empirical study.

8.3.1.2 Evaluation Process

Five-Phase Approach to Evaluation

Based on the analysis in the literature review chapters, the adapted model reduces the 17 UFE steps to 11, by reverting to the original 12 steps; removing the steps for metaevaluation and evaluator competency assessment; and incorporating a newly introduced theory of change step. This reduction seeks to simplify the process and adapt it to the current practice of evaluations in the sector. Furthermore, the 11 steps are infused into a five-phase approach, which enables an internal process to determine departmental readiness for an evaluation before planning and appointing an evaluator. To promote use, evaluation is undertaken in accordance with the following five phases:

1. Organisational readiness for UFE (UFE Step 1)

The first phase is aimed at determining whether the department is ready to undertake an evaluation. In this phase, the M&E unit facilitates a process of assessing the attitude of staff towards participating in and championing an evaluation and identifies lessons learned from previous evaluations and potential champions of evaluations. This requires honest and frank reflection about the

departmental evaluation culture, practice, attitudes and challenges. In addition, the assessment should also consider programmes that may be keener and more enthusiastic about evaluations.

If the assessment determines that a department is not ready for an evaluation, sufficient time and resources must be spent to remedy the situation before engaging in an evaluation. It is in this step that the recommendation for the institutionalisation of evaluations through change management finds relevance. There is no point in planning and undertaking an evaluation when the department is not ready for it. This will result in non-use. However, if the assessment points to challenges that can be remedied during the evaluation, the process may continue.

2. Evaluation Planning (UFE Steps 2 and 3)

Once the organisation is ready, the next phase is to do the following:

- (a) Establish a steering committee that includes the key stakeholders as per the definition and criteria referred to earlier
- (b) Appoint an external expert to serve as a resource in the planning process
- (c) Identify the evaluand, preliminary evaluation purpose and questions
- (d) Develop criteria for appointing an evaluator who is competent in UFE

3. Inception Phase (UFE Steps 4-12)

The appointed evaluator conducts situational analysis with the steering committee; identifies primary intended uses; considers and builds in process use; focusses on priority evaluation questions; checks the fundamentals of evaluation; determines the theory of change; negotiates appropriate methods; makes sure that the steering committee understands potential controversies about methods and their implications; and simulates use. The inception phase can be understood as the technical planning phase of the evaluation.

4. Execution Phase (steps 13-15)

This entails the data collection, analysis and presentation as well as the preparation of the evaluation report to facilitate use. This step must be undertaken by the evaluator or the evaluation team alone as a measure to protect the objectivity of the evaluation and the independence of the evaluator. Once the draft report is completed, it must be presented to the steering committee for discussion and inputs. The evaluator finalises the report after receiving it and, where necessary, incorporates inputs from the steering committee members.

5. Post-evaluation and Follow-up Phase (UFE Steps 16 and 17)

The quality assessment of the report is undertaken by the DPME; findings of the evaluation are disseminated; improvement plans are developed, implemented and reported by the department; and, as a means to enforce use, AGSA audits the department to determine the use of the evaluation. Although the whole evaluation has to be undertaken with use in mind, the post-evaluation and follow-up phase is key to the uptake and use of the evaluation. It is at this stage that the accountability framework is followed by means of the following:

- Audit of the use of the evaluation
- PM's performance assessment of the evaluation
- Self-assessment by the M&E unit to determine use
- Use of the evaluation in the planning process led by the strategic planning unit
- Reporting on and monitoring of the MIP by both the audit body and the M&E unit

Table 8.2 below presents a summary of the five-phase approach. It summarises the key steps according to each phase, indicates which UFE step is involved, outlines the key participants and describes the new features. This table denotes how the UFE approach was streamlined to fit the South African agriculture sector context.

Table 8.2: Summary of the Five- Phase Approach

Phase 1: Organisational Readiness			
Key Actions or Steps	UFE Steps	Key Participants	New Features
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess organisational readiness for UFE • Implement remedial measures if the department is not ready for an evaluation • Develop criteria to appoint evaluators competent in UFE 	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal M&E unit • Departmental management 	<p>Organisational readiness is determined before an evaluation is undertaken or an evaluator appointed.</p> <p>The change management process to change the attitude towards evaluations</p> <p>Development of evaluation standard operating procedures</p> <p>Identify evaluation champions</p>
Phase 2: Evaluation Planning			
Key Actions or Steps	UFE Steps	Key Participants	New Features
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a steering committee based on definition of stakeholders and criteria developed (PIUs); • Appoint an external expert to serve as a resource in planning • Identify the evaluand; evaluation purpose; and key questions 	2, 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steering committee • UFE expert • External stakeholders 	<p>Inclusion of strategic planning unit, beneficiaries, service delivery level officials; and UFE expert</p> <p>This process is undertaken before an evaluator is appointed</p> <p>Linkages of the evaluation timeframes to the planning and budgeting cycles</p> <p>Use of the expert UFE evaluator to develop criteria to appoint UFE competent evaluator; formulate useful and relevant evaluation questions; and appoint the evaluation team</p> <p>PMs voluntarily submit their programmes for evaluations.</p>
Phase 3: Inception			

Key Actions or Steps	UFE Steps	Key Participants	New Features
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct situational analysis • Identify primary intended use • Consider and build in process use • Focus priority evaluation questions • Check the fundamentals of evaluation • Determine the theory of change • Negotiate appropriate methods • Make sure that the steering committee understands potential controversies about methods and their implications • Simulate use 	4-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steering committee • External evaluator • External stakeholders 	<p>While this phase is largely driven by the evaluator, the model advocates for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater interaction between the evaluator and the steering committee on key questions, purpose, and methods of evaluation • Full participation of PMs as required by the performance management system
Phase 4: Execution			
Key Actions or Steps	UFE Steps	Key Participants	New Features
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data collection; • Analysis and presentation of data; and • Preparation of the evaluation report 	14-15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluator or evaluation team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excludes the PIUs and limits participation in the validation workshops to protect objectivity and independence of evaluation
Phase 5: Post-Evaluation and Follow Up			
Key Actions or Steps	UFE Steps	Key Participants	New Features
Quality assessment of the evaluation	16-17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DPME • Steering committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountability mechanisms that include audits by

<p>Dissemination of evaluation findings</p> <p>Develop, implement and report on the improvement plans</p> <p>Oversight audit of the department to determine use of the evaluation</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AGSA • Internal audit • Internal control unit • M&E unit 	<p>AGSA, internal audit, internal control units</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rapid self-assessments by M&E unit to determine use • Audit of compliance with planning requirements and MIP reporting • Treasury uses evaluations to determine programme funding • PMs performance assessment considers their participation and use of evaluation
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Source: Created by researcher (2021)

The adapted model incorporates an implementation framework which is depicted in table 8.3 below. The implementation framework is derived from the empirical research on the practice of evaluation in the South African agriculture sector. It is based on the recognition that the model alone would not result in the use of evaluations. Instead, the effectiveness of the model depends on its integration with institutions, systems, and policies. This is informed by the findings in section 7.3.2 that there are negative perceptions about evaluations; supporting structures are weak or not fully participating in the evaluation, there lack of accountability by Programme Managers and poor integration of evaluations with other systems of government. To address these barriers an implementation framework was built into the adapted model. This framework aims to support implementation of the model. Key features of the implementation framework are the supporting mechanisms which are grouped into four categories, namely: crucial elements for use; supporting structures; the accountability framework; and systems integration.

This responds more specifically to the primary research question of the study:

What is needed to promote the effective use of evaluations in the South African agricultural sector?

The top row of Table 8.3 below depicts the five-phase evaluation discussed earlier. The second row shows the organisational elements that are crucial for the utilisation of evaluations. As discussed in the sections on recommendations and the model description, promoting evaluation use would require change in the departmental evaluation culture to ensure that PMs are receptive, understand the value of evaluations and participate fully in the evaluations. This would be based on a change management process to create a receptive evaluation culture and the voluntary participation of PMs in the evaluations

Table 8.3: An Implementation Framework of the Adapted Model

		Phase 1: Organisational Readiness	Phase 2: Evaluation Planning	Phase 3: Inception	Phase 4: Evaluation	Phase 5: Post- evaluation follow up
Crucial elements for	Receptive Organisational Culture					
	Voluntary Participation					
Structures	Supporting M&E units					
	Supporting Strategic Planning Units					
	Department Evaluation Working Group					
	Steering Committee					
	Participation by Programme Managers (PM)					
	PM Self Identify Programmes of evaluation					
Accountability Framework	Utilisation Focused Expert					
	Audits (internal and external)					
	Internal control compliance assessment					
	M&E unit use self-assessment					
	SMS performance agreements					
Systems Integration	Evaluation based budgeting					
	Alignment with performance management system					
	Enforce MIP reporting					
	Standard Operating Procedures					
	Evaluation time frame alined with planning, budgeting and reporting cycles					

Source: Created by the researcher

In the first column, the four enabling/supporting mechanisms discussed earlier are presented. These enabling/supporting mechanisms are grouped into four categories, namely: crucial elements for use of evaluations; supporting structures; the accountability framework; and systems integration. Each element of the supporting structures has been coded with a colour (or colours) similar to the phase of the evaluation to which it is most applicable. Elements that are applicable throughout the phases have been coded green.

8.4. Conclusion

The thrust of this chapter was to respond to the question of what can be done to promote the use of evaluations in the South African agricultural sector. Based on the results of the empirical study, the following was recommended to promote the use of evaluations:

- (a) Change in the departmental evaluation culture
- (b) Institutionalisation of accountability mechanisms
- (c) Integration of evaluations with other systems of government
- (d) Strengthening of evaluation support structures
- (e) Enforcing of MIP reporting
- (f) Use of external UFE experts
- (g) Clear definition of PIUs

These recommendations inform the supporting mechanisms of the adapted model.

It has been found that the preliminary five-phase model that was developed from the findings of the literature review was a solid foundation and properly conceptualised. However, the effectiveness of the model depends on strong supporting mechanisms and a sound accountability framework. Accordingly, the fundamentals of the final model remain the same, while the empirical study results have been used to enhance it by developing a stronger accountability mechanism. In conclusion, to promote use the evaluation process should be (a) based on a five-phased approach; (b) supported

by structural accountability and an integrated system mechanism; and (c) conducted in a receptive departmental evaluation culture.

This dissertation makes significant contributions at two key levels. Its first important contribution is that it responds to an important call for "...the promotion and adaptation of evaluation tools, instruments, strategies, theories, and models to ensure relevancy in African settings..." (Chilisa et al, 2016:316). The UFE model has been adapted to the context of how evaluations are practiced in the South African agriculture sector. While it has been adapted for the South African agriculture sector it can potentially be used in the broader public sector because of the similarities in the processes, systems, and policies of the public sector.

In the second place, this research makes a significant contribution to the study of evaluations in South African agricultural sector by not only identifying the challenges to evaluation use in the context of the agricultural sector but also making a concrete proposal of what can be done to promote it in the form of an adapted model. The biggest advantage of this model is its simplification of the UFE approach and its contextualisation in the practice of evaluations (procedures and systems) in the South African public (agricultural) sector. Its links with other government systems, such as planning, budgeting and performance management, make it part of the general government system. It is a simple 'how to' model, the implementation of which could promote the effective utilisation of evaluations in the South African agricultural sector.

8.5. Recommendations for future research

While a wide range of issues pertaining to the use of evaluations in the South African agriculture sector have been addressed in this dissertation, there are few areas that could not be investigated or explored comprehensively in order to delimitate and focus the research. Below is a list of areas recommended for further research in the future:

- The notion of Made in Africa evaluation, the extent to which this model incorporates the African perspective, and the African Evaluation Tree is worth further investigation. This investigation must deal with integration of specific African practices and perspectives in the adaptation of the UFE model.
- This research did not have an opportunity to deal with evaluation practice in 7 other provincial departments of agriculture because they did not conduct any evaluation. It would add significant value to investigate why these provinces do not conduct evaluations.
- The lack or inconsistent participation of Programme Managers in the evaluation process is at the heart of the failures to the use of evaluations. Therefore, it would be useful to investigate in greater depth the role, reasons, and what can be done to ensure their participation. While this research dealt with these issues within its own limitations, there is a good case for more in-depth and focused investigation.
- Thematic analysis based on deductive reasoning informed the identification of themes, and these themes in turn informed the compilation of the interview guide. Given that the interview guide already prompted for specific themes, an inductive approach in retrospect would have presented different themes. This would have required a different approach from the start. The research did not adopt an inductive approach where themes were deduced from the empirical data through a less structured data collection tool. This may be useful in future research studies to identify further factors that may influence the take up of evaluations.

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Appendices

Semi-structured Interview Schedule

Semi Structured Interview schedule:

A model to promote effective use of evaluations in the South African Agriculture sector

Introductory Remarks:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview which is about use of evaluations in the South African agriculture sector. This interview should take about 40 minutes and will be recorded and transcribed to enable data analysis. Please note that there are no right or wrong answers to my questions, I am only interested in your opinions. Be at ease to decline to answer any questions or seek clarity if the question is unclear. Your answers to the following questions will help me understand the practice of evaluations and in the development of the model. Please feel at any point to refer me to any agency or document for additional information should you deem it necessary.

Before I begin do I have your permission to record this interview?

Theme	Questions
1. Background of Interviewee	a. For the record kindly indicate your name, position and your responsibilities?
2. Role of M&E units in the evaluations	a. What role did the you play in the evaluation(s) conducted in the agriculture departments?
3. Implementation of recommendations	a. Which of the evaluation recommendations were implemented in full, in part, or resulted in some change in practice b. Which of the evaluation recommendations will possibly be still implemented in the future?

<p>4. Use of evaluation challenges</p>	<p>a. What barriers and impediments prevented the evaluation findings to be used</p>
<p>5. Evaluation systems</p>	<p>a. What systems and processes are in place in the department to facilitate the use of evidence?</p> <p>a. Composition of Steering Committees?</p> <p>b. Departmental Evaluation Policy (s)</p> <p>c. Capacity of the M&E unit</p>
<p>6. Participation of Managers and other stakeholders</p>	<p>a. what is the extend of participation of programme managers, relevant officials and other stakeholders in the management of evaluations?</p>
<p>7. Facilitating use</p>	<p>a. How can evaluation use be promoted and advanced in the future?</p>

Closing Remarks:

Thank you so much for participating and answering my questions. Should you wish to provide me with additional information after the interview feel free to contact me. Thank you!!!