

RESPONSIBILITIES, FUNCTIONS AND RESOURCING M&E

13

DISCUSSION BRIEF 13



BACKGROUND

In examining the responsibilities, functions and resourcing of monitoring and evaluation in a SETA environment, there is a need to reflect on the capacity 'to do' evaluations, the reporting requirements, and the capacity 'to use' M&E information across a number of national systems. Within this broad framing and with reference to the Post School Education and Training sector, and skills development in particular, there are important questions related to 'what' needs to be monitored and evaluated, and for whom.

The Government Wide Monitoring and Evaluation System makes it clear that accounting officers (e.g. CEOs in SETAs) and accounting authorities (e.g. SETA Boards) are accountable for the frequency and quality of M&E information and the integrity of the systems responsible for its production and utilisation. Programme managers and other line managers and officials are responsible for establishing M&E systems. Designated M&E units are responsible for ensuring the implementation of M&E strategies by providing expertise and support.

In order to support those responsible for M&E, the National Evaluation Policy Framework establishes an institutional framework for evaluations and provides guidance on the approaches to be used when conducting evaluations.

The National Evaluation Policy Framework also stresses the importance of a 'line of sight' that traces the government's strategic priorities across levels of government. These include long-term visions and plans (e.g. the National Development Plan); five-year planning cycles (e.g. the Medium Term Strategic Framework; sectoral and cross-sectoral plans (e.g. Human Resource Development); implementation programmes (e.g. the National Skills Development Strategy III); project plans (e.g. the artisan training project) and departmental/ institutional strategic plans (e.g. Annual Performance Plans and Sector Skills Plans). With regard to SETA monitoring and evaluation, this 'line of sight' includes an enormous array of plans, policies and strategies (see Ward and Rosenberg 2019 SETA M&E Project 1 Scoping Report for an overview). Of particular relevance, in terms of responsibilities, functions and resourcing SETA related M&E, are the Skills Development Act; the White Paper on Post School Education and Training; and the National Skills Development Plan.

The Constitution lays the basis for the formation of institutions that monitor and evaluate government entities including Parliament, the President, the Auditor General, National Treasury, and the Public Services Commission. In addition, specific pieces of legislation establish other institutions such as the Human Resource Development Commission that have a mandate to oversee aspects of skills development, as does the Department of Higher Education and Training, the SETA Boards, and the National Skills Authority.



INSIGHTS

The Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation have provided substantial M&E policies, frameworks and guidelines that have the potential to enhance the capacity 'to do' M&E in the SETA environment. However, a review of SETA M&E frameworks/ plans/ policies (these terms are often used interchangeably by the SETAs) revealed very different levels of M&E capacity within the SETAs. This includes varying levels of M&E planning; the number and kinds of evaluations done; the number and capacity of staff doing M&E; and the integration and collaboration within and between SETAs with regard to M&E.

These capacity constraints were exacerbated by diverse and at time ad hoc reporting requirements. In the various interactions with role players in the SETAs and DHET, it became apparent that SETAs were reporting into multiple entities. These included: Parliament, parliamentary committees, the Auditor General; National Treasury; the DPME; DHET (including the Skills Branch; the QCTO and SAQA); Sector Line Departments; SETA Board and Stakeholders; the SETA CEOs; and internal managers. This introduced substantial challenges due to the ad hoc nature of some requests, in terms of time and information required; the complexity of data management across these different reporting requirements; and a focus on performance monitoring for compliance to the exclusion of M&E for learning and improvement.

The White Paper on PSET, the National Skills Development Plan and the National Plan for PSET all make specific reference to the National Skills Authority in terms of expanding its scope of work beyond the mandate in the Skills Development Act. By way of example, the WP-PSET states that



“A restructured and refocused National Skills Authority will concentrate specifically on monitoring and evaluating the SETAs. This implies that it will become an expert body with high-level monitoring and evaluation skills.”

The Governmental Technical Advisory Centre (GTAC) was requested by DHET and NSA to develop a Business Case for the repositioning and resourcing of the NSA to fulfil this expanded mandate. This report suggests that the NSA focus its functions more on SETA evaluations while relying on the Skills Branch within DHET to monitor SETA management and performance.

Within the SETAs, a number of different structures (e.g. M&E units, quality management units, research units, strategy and planning units, information units, reporting units) are allocated different responsibilities in relation to M&E. It was noted that with quality management moving more directly to the QCTO, there was a possibility of using internal quality management expertise to boost M&E capacity within the SETAs, if required, through M&E capacity development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendation focus on four main areas identified within the emerging insights.

1 In terms of the capacity to design and implement M&E processes related to the outputs, outcomes and impacts of their activities, it is evident that there are significant differences between SETAs. It is recommended that heuristics such as the simple 'performance matrix' along side and reviews of existing M&E frameworks and practices be used to stimulate discussion on levels of capacity across the SETAs. The recently introduced Chapter 5 in the SSP provides an opportunity to engage on this ability 'to do' M&E as does the Collaborative Research Working Group. More opportunities need to be created for the SETAs to work together to share insights and approaches to M&E as well as share and build on collective/ systemic insights across the SETAs.

No M&E Plan	M&E Plan Development	M&E Plan Resourced	M&E Plan Implemented	Ongoing M&E Plan Refined
No evaluations done	Ad hoc evaluations	Systematic evaluations done	Evaluations feed into strategic planning	Multi-year evaluations done
No M&E staff	Some M&E staff	M&E capacited	Adequate number of M&E staff	Collaboration with other SETAs on M&E
Evaluation focus unclear	Quality of outputs evaluated	Relevance of outputs evaluated	Outcomes evaluated	Impacts evaluated
Diagnostic evaluation	Design evaluation	Implementation evaluation	Economic evaluation	Synthesis evaluation

2 The second area that requires consideration is the number of institutions that have an interest in the performance of the SETAs. It is recommended that a few 'core' indicators be used to report to all relevant stakeholders. This may include indicators on: expenditure and performance; programmes and beneficiaries; outputs, outcomes, impacts and lessons learnt. Supplementing this core reporting framework would be additional levels of detail relevant to the diverse stakeholders but carefully structure through a rigorous performance information framework. A few key activities and indicators that should be focused on contribute a significant amount towards achieving the core objectives of SETAs, as opposed to trying to measure and track many indicators. This can be supported through the development of a Theory of Change informed by various policy and planning documents (National Development Plan, the WP-PSET, the National Plan for Post School Education and Training and the National Skills Development Plan).

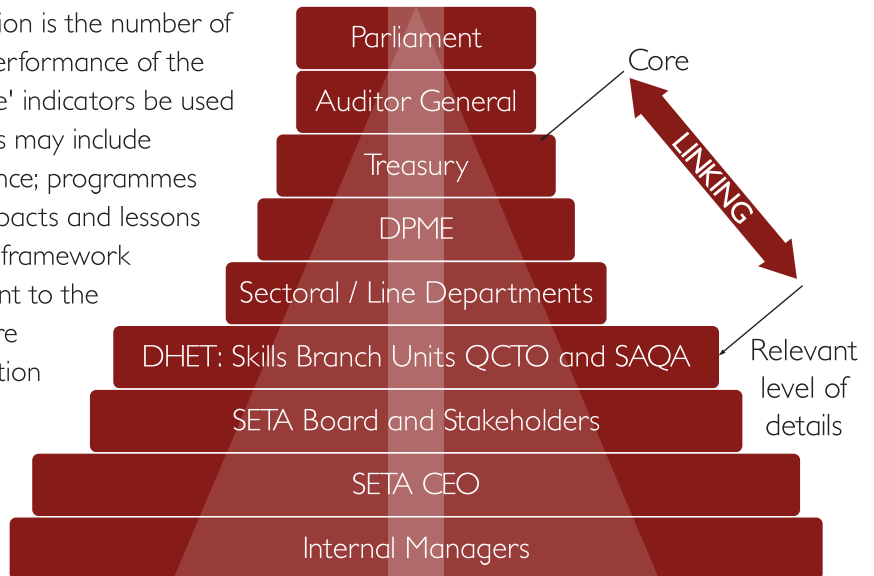


Figure 1: Layers of reporting

3 The White Paper on Post School Education and Training and a number of subsequent planning documents propose that the mandate of the NSA be expanded to focus on SETA M&E. It is recommended that the suggestions and structures contained in the GTAC Business Case be implemented. This would include a clarification of the division of responsibilities between the Skills Branch and the National Skills Authority with regard to M&E in the SETA environment.

4 There is a need to move beyond a focus on compliance monitoring and to use evaluations to inform strategic planning and to build better theory and practices across the PSET sector. Capacity development should build on the foundation created by the national evaluation framework and associated guidelines and use these to support expansive learning cycles that improve both internal and external performance of the SETAs. DHET could support these processes by defining broad functional requirements and associated competencies that SETAs should possess in terms of M&E while leaving space for the individual SETAs to decide on the actual structures required to fulfil these functions.

DISCUSSION BRIEF QUESTIONS

1

Does the 'line of sight' across the various PSET and skills development policy and planning documents provide a clear and streamlined focus for SETAs? Is this clearly articulated in a Theory of Change that could form the basis for monitoring and evaluation SETA environment?

2

Could a core set of key and common indicators be developed and used to report to multiple stakeholders?

3

What is the progress in terms of implementing the GTAC recommendations related to the functions and associated structure and resourcing of the NSA?

4

Is it feasible for DHET to define the functions that SETAs need to fulfil and the kinds of capacity needed to fulfil these functions, while leaving it up to SETAs to realise these functions through a range of structures relevant to the individual sectors?

FURTHER READING

All SETA M&E Project Reports and other deliverables are available at www.ru.ac.za/elrc/projects/meinasetaenvironment/publicationsusefullinks/deliverables

All DPME M&E Guidelines are available at www.dpme.gov.za/keyfocusareas/evaluationsSite/Pages/Guidelines.aspx

Ward, M. and Rosenberg, E. 2019. SETA M&E Project 7: Develop a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for the Mandatory Grant: Scoping Report. Rhodes University, Grahamstown