AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON THE MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEMS OF NON-PROFIT ORGANISATIONS IN THE WESTERN CAPE

by

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ABSTRACT

The implementation of Monitoring and Evaluation (herein referred to as M&E) activities and processes have become a critical tool for accountability, transparency and impact within Non-Profit Organisations (herein referred to as NPOs) within South Africa. The study aimed to explore the implementation of M&E systems within NPOs in the Western Cape.

The study utilised a qualitative exploratory research design as its purpose was to explore perceptions and experiences of NPOs within the Western Cape region. The sample size consisted of 16 NPOs. All participants were involved in M&E implementation within their organisations. Of the 16 NPOs represented, 5 were M&E personnel, 5 were CEOs/directors and 6 participants performed M&E duties as an added responsibility to their job titles. The study utilised a semi-structured interview guide for in-depth interviews that allowed for engagement between the researcher and participants. Furthermore, the study employed a thematic analysis for the qualitative data collected.

The findings of the study showed that the perceptions of participants were influenced by various factors such as experience, training, and the M&E capacity of staff. Participants highlighted that M&E systems were implemented for programme implementation, accountability, and donor requirements. The experience of implementation was characterised by both positives and negatives which to varying degrees affected the implementation of the system. Challenges identified included system challenges; shortage of human and skilled resources as well as financial capacity to undertake M&E within organisations. Participants also highlighted M&E as a beneficial tool that allowed for programme support and implementation, accountability claims and funding opportunities.

The findings from the research aims to contribute to the knowledge of M&E within NPOs. It is intended that the study's findings will contribute to the practice of M&E within NPOs as well as the research available on this field of study.

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Lastly, to the NPOs who participated in this study and are paving the way for impactful change within their various NPO sectors.

DEDICATION

To my great-grandmother who is the embodiment of strength and grace.

This is for you, mamma.

Because of you, I am.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1.Introduction

This chapter will provide a statement of the problem and the significance and rationale of the study. It will then present the research topic, research questions, and assumptions. This will be followed by definitions for various key terms and a discussion of the ethical considerations of the study.

1.2.Context of the NPO Sector in South Africa

The South African Non-Profit Organisation (NPO) sector is acknowledged as a driving force in alleviating the nation's socio-economic issues (Patel, 2012). According to Choto, Tenguh, and Iwu (2020) the sector's essential services significantly impact community development and safeguard citizens against situations and experiences that are demeaning and dehumanizing. Therefore, it is not a coincidence that South Africa's National Development Plan (NDP) (National Planning Commission, 2011) notes that all the country's provinces rely heavily on NPOs to provide these essential services.

However, despite the vital role NPOs play in resolving the issues facing society and the communities they work in, there are several variables that have threatened their long-term functioning; making their efforts in socio-economic development challenging to forecast. With the growth of the NPO sector, not only in size but visibility all over the world, several practices have been adopted to counter the challenges faced by the sector aiming to improve the sustainability, accountability, and credibility of NPOs (Choto, Iwu & Tengeh, 2020; Marshall & Suarez, 2014). Implementing M&E practices is argued to assist organisations in becoming more efficient and effective in their work, accountable in their practices, and financially disciplined in their pursuit of longevity (van Rensburg, 2008; Molapo 2017; Mueller-Hirth, 2012). According to the NPO Register in the Department of Social Development (Department of Social Development (DSD), year unknown), there are 276 018 NPOSs currently registered in South Africa. The Western Cape (Western Cape Government, 2020) reports a total of 23 349 NPOs registered with 62.4% working in the sectors of economic, social and community development; youth services; services with children, elderly and people with disabilities; education and health. Undoubtedly NPOs fill a crucial role within the South Africa Socio-economic landscape, however, research is still limited on ways NPOs can adequately sustain themselves, particularly concerning the significant role of M&E within the NPO sector since its introduction. This factor is essential when one considers that NPOs engage in various activities, take on different forms in diverse communities and fields of focus.

1.3.Statement of the Problem

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems are defined in various ways. Simister (2009:1) defines M&E systems as "… a series of policies, practices, and processes that enables the systematic and effective collection, analysis and use of monitoring and evaluation information". Whereas Gorgens and Kusek (2009:2) define M&E systems as "…a management tool to measure and evaluate outcomes, providing information for governance and evidence-based decision making." These feedback systems which Gorgens & Kusek (2009) and Simister (2009) speak of have become an integral part of assessing social programmes within the Non-Profit Organisation (NPO) sector.

The growth of the NPO sector has coincided with the growth of extensive management techniques employed to enhance accountability and transparency within organisations as well as measure and evaluate the impact of the organisations' activities (Marshall & Suarez, 2014; van Rensburg, 2008). Research shows that M&E systems are implemented for internal use such as measuring and evaluating the quality, quantity and impact of programmes provided by organisations (Molapo, 2019), as well as informing the decision-making capabilities of the organisation through the provision of valuable information collected by the M&E system (van Rensburg, 2008). In addition, Abrahams (2015) argues that M&E systems also serve an external use for stakeholder accountability to satisfy donor requirements for monitoring resources and evaluating impact. This is supported by Marshall & Suarez (2014) who claim that M&E systems are a tool to attract potential donors by demonstrating the efficacy of organisational resources towards achieving programme objectives (Marshall & Suarez, 2014). As such, research demonstrates that M&E systems serve different purposes and functions.

A great deal of research on M&E system implementation in South Africa has been conducted within the public sector and has focussed on organisation performance and evaluation outcomes (Ntoyanto, 2017; Phetla, 2017). Many of them have adopted case study approaches and have demonstrates the relevancy and growth of M&E in government departments. For instance, the early 2000s saw an increase in the establishment of M&E units within all South African government departments to achieve the task of monitoring and evaluating the delivery of services and the performance of each department (Abrahams, 2015). However, research on M&E systems within NPOs has been largely neglected, which is contradictory to the large presence of M&E systems within the sector and its impact on NPOs (Abrahams, 2015; Mueller-Hirth, 2012). NPOs have been recognised as vital players in the delivery of social programmes to address socio-economic development and transformation challenges – not only in South Africa but globally too (Choto, Iwu & Tengeh, 2020). Yet, the lack of available research on M&E system implementation in the South African NPO sector undermines the role of M&E within programme evaluation as well as overall organisational performance (Mueller-Hirth, 2012). Furthermore, research within the NPO sector demonstrates that accountability measures are an important donor requirement for NPOs to secure funding and have been a primary motivator for M&E within the NPO sector (Mueller-Hirth, 2012). As such, motivations for M&E systems within organisations have varied between meeting the internal M&E needs of the organisation and external M&E reporting needs of donors and other external stakeholders (van Rensburg, 2008; Honu-Siabi, 2013; McGill, 2020). However, lack of data on how M&E systems are implemented continues to narrow the scope of M&E system implementation.

This study, therefore, attempts to contribute to knowledge by exploring the implementation of M&E systems within NPOs. The purpose of the study was to explore the internal and external drivers of M&E system implementation within NPOs in the Western Cape through the exploration of the experiences, perceptions and understanding of M&E system implementation by those tasked with these duties. The intention was to gain a qualitative understanding of a field which is still largely under-researched and provide a better understanding of the use and experience of the implementation of M&E systems for programme evaluation.

1.4.Rationale and Significance of the Study

The study expected to gain a deeper understanding of M&E system implementation by exploring the experiences, perceptions, and attitudes of those tasked with implementing these systems within NPOs. Through this, the study aimed to contribute to literature by informing recommendations for effective M&E systems that can assist NPOs in implementing systems. This was done by exploring the challenges, experiences and benefits of M&E systems which can provide useful information to NPOs for implementation of M&E systems. By being aware of the experiences of M&E system implementation, it hoped to provide NPOs and donors with an opportunity to support, provide resources and services to M&E personnel to ensure that M&E system implementation is effective and yields the desired results through a collaborative effort.

1.5.Research Topic

An exploratory study on the monitoring and evaluation systems of Non-profit Organisations in Western Cape.

1.6.Main Research Questions

1. What are the perceptions of Monitoring and Evaluation systems within Non-Profit Organisations in the Western Cape?
2. What are the positive and negative experiences of implementing Monitoring and Evaluation systems within Non-Profit Organisations?
3. What are the benefits of having Monitoring and Evaluation systems in place in the Non-Profit Organisation sector?
4. What are the challenges of Monitoring and Evaluation system implementation within the Non-Profit Organisation sector?

1.7. Main Research Objectives

- To explore the perceptions of Monitoring and Evaluation systems within Non-Profit Organisations in the Western Cape
- To examine the positive and negative experiences of implementing Monitoring and Evaluation systems within Non-Profit Organisations
- To determine the benefits of having Monitoring and Evaluation systems in place in the Non-Profit Organisation sector
- To understand the challenges of Monitoring and Evaluation system implementation within the Non-Profit Organisation sector

1.8.Main Assumptions

- Monitoring and Evaluation systems may be adopted for donor accountability
- Monitoring and Evaluation systems may be underutilised or not executed to its full potential within the Non-Profit Organisation sector
- There may be a shortage of human, skill or financial capacity for Monitoring and Evaluation implementation within the Non-Profit Organisation sector
- Monitoring and Evaluation may be largely neglected in programme planning

1.9.Clarification of Terms

The clarification of concepts that will be used in the study aims to ensure the reader has absolute clarity of the meanings which are attributed to the terms in the study.

Monitoring: the routine collection of information of set indicators for a policy/project/programme collected for management to use in planning and decision-making (Mueller-Hirth, 2012).

Evaluation: assessing a completed or ongoing policy/project or programme in a systematic and objective manner to measure its success, failure, or progress in terms of its effective, efficiency and sustainability (Gorgens & Kusek 2009).

Monitoring and Evaluation: Mackay (2007:1) refers to Monitoring and Evaluation as a management tool that is used to "measure the quantity, quality and targeting of goods and services – the outputs – that the state provides and to measure the outcomes and impacts resulting from the outputs." In this dissertation, the state will refer to NPOs as the institution of reference.

Monitoring and Evaluation system: is defined as "a series of policies, practices and processes that enable the systematic and effective collection, analysis and use of monitoring and evaluation information" (Simister, 2009).

Non-Profit Organisation: refers to non-governmental organisations (NGOs), faith-based organisations (FBO), and community-based organisations and other developmental and social organisations that are established primarily to address society or community issues and not the generation of profit and assets for founders or its members (Choto, Iwu & Tengeh, 2020).

Donor: A donor refers to an individual, organisation or government who provides resources, either monetary or material, to organisations in support of programmes, projects, and organisational operational costs in response to an organisation's request (Department of Social Development, 2001).

1.10.Ethical Considerations

To partake in research involving human participants, the researcher had an obligation to ensure that they abided by ethical principles to guarantee the respect and protection of the participants, as well as anticipate any ethical issues which might have arisen during the research process (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). During the research process, the following ethical research principles were followed:

Informed Consent – The researcher had an obligation to ensure that participants were adequately informed about all possible information concerning the research study (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport, 2005). The researcher obtained informed written consent from participants who agreed to partake in the study before any information was collected. An informed consent form (Appendix

A) was typed out and sent to possible participants. The consent form contained information explaining the aims and implications of the research study; the identification of the researcher; the guarantee of confidentiality of the participant's involvement; and information stating that participation in the study is voluntary i.e., participants can withdraw from the research study at any time.

Deception of Respondents and Debriefing – The researcher had an obligation to not deliberately misrepresent facts to deceive participants in consenting to the research study and during the research process (De Vos et al., 2005). The researcher therefore discussed the purpose of the study and how the data obtained from participants will be used to inform and answer research questions. To avoid confusion, the researcher communicated using clear, straightforward, and appropriate language suitable for the context and avoided using biased and persuasive language which could affect the response of participants to certain questions and therefore influence the data collected. After the interviews were conducted, participants were debriefed to inform them of the way interview data will be used within the study.

Anonymity, Privacy, and Confidentiality – The most important ethical principal in dealing with human subjects is the protection of participants' identity (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). In order to maintain anonymity in research, a respondent's response cannot be linked to a specific respondent (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The researcher requested the name and the NPO of the respondent on the consent form for the research study, and engaged in qualitative interviews with them, thus it could not guarantee true anonymity of the participants. However, the researcher ensured the confidentiality of participants by assigning pseudonyms to the participants which was only to the knowledge of the researcher.

Confidentiality refers to the agreement between two parties which limits others' access to private information (De Vos et al, 2005). The researcher used pseudonyms for each participant to ensure that any recorded information cannot be traced to the participant nor their NPO. Transcripts and interview recordings were stored in an electronic file that was password protected and only accessible to the researcher.

De Vos et al (2005:16) states that privacy refers to that which is "not intended for others to observe or analyse". For remote interviews, the researcher ensured that they were alone to protect the privacy and not compromise the identity of the participant. The researcher recommended participants move to an area that promoted their privacy or that was free from disturbance for the period of the interview. To offer participants an extra layer of privacy, online interviews were conducted with the screen off depending on the participants' preference.

Voluntary Participation – Babbie & Mouton (2001) argue that social research represents an interruption or intrusion into the lives of people. It is therefore important that no one is forced to participant in the study against their free will. To ensure voluntary participation of the study, the researcher included within the written informed consent form that participation in the study is completely voluntary and that participants can withdraw from the study at any time. This was explained at the beginning of each interview. Participants were allowed to withdraw from the study at any time. If a participant wished to withdraw from the study, they needed to notify the researcher through email, text message or phone call.

Competence of the Researcher – De Vos et al. (2005) state that researchers have an ethical obligation to ensure that they are adequately competent to undertake the skills needed for proper investigation. The researcher, a Master's student who has conducted a minor research project as an Honours research project, was guided by their supervisor during the research process to ensure competency.

1.11. Summary

This chapter has outlined the research problem and the research questions and objectives which have arisen from the research problem. It has described the significance and rationale of the subject; clarified concepts as well as discussed, the ethical issues considered and accounted for within research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

Chapter two provides a review of literature on the research topic; the relevant theoretical frameworks; and the major policies and legislation linked to the study. The literature review aims to identify and cover a range of factors intended to familiarise the researcher with the relevant information concerning the area of study.

2.2. Theoretical Frameworks

The research study is underpinned by two key theoretical frameworks. These include the Resource Dependency Theory (RDT) (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978) and Systems Theory (Bertalanffy, 1968).

2.2.1. The Resource Dependency Theory

Resource Dependency Theory is based on the principle that an organisation's behaviour is affected by external resources. Brought forth by Pfeffer and Salancik (1978), the theory proposes that organisations engage in various processes with the external environment to secure access to the necessary resources needed to operate. The arguments made by RDT can be summed by the following: The resources that organisations need are found in the external environment which includes various other organisations as well. As such, resources which are essential to one organisation may be in the hand of another organisation. The relation of power to resources becomes clear. Therefore, to secure resources necessary for an organisation's survival, an organisation changes and adapts to fulfil the requirements to secure resources (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). The limited funding pool in South Africa has led many organisations to change the nature of their operations to become more donor attractive. This has meant adopting techniques that are in line with donor requirements such as M&E system implementation. Organisations who are dependent on financial resources from donors, utilise the implementation of M&E systems within the organisations for both organisational learning and donor accountability (Mueller-Hirth, 2012).

2.2.2. Systems Theory

Systems theory refers to the manner in which parts or various components interact with one another as a whole (Bertalanffy, 1968; Turner, 2011). The theory can be traced back to the general systems theory of biology which sees all organisms as systems that are composed of subsystems, which in turn are part of super-system (Turner, 2011). The theory has been adopted in various other fields including organisational management (Teebom, 2018). The individual components of a system work together to function effectively as a whole and are therefore dependent on another, this can also refer to the components of an M&E system which requires the human resource and processes of the system to interact together for the overall effectiveness and efficiency of M&E system implementation. Acaroglu (2017) proposed six key elements to creating a system thinking mindset within the organisation. These include the interconnectedness and synthesis of various parts of a whole to obtain synergy between them. This relates to the emergence of the outcomes of synergy as the various parts of the system interact with one another in unpredictable ways (Acaroglu, 2017). Another element proposed by Acaroglu (2017) are feedback loops which serve to guide changes or decision making which needs to happen as information about the interconnectedness between parts of the system become available. The next element Acaroglu (2017) refers to is the causality of the influence of the components that makes up a system on another. The author proposes that by understanding causality, there will be clarity on the interconnectedness to function as a whole (Acaroglu, 2017). Lastly, the author proposes systems mapping which is a tool in systems thinking that can be used to identify and logically map the interrelated parts of the system to help the organisation with decision making for effectiveness and efficiency of the system (Acaroglu, 2017). By gaining an understanding of the experiences of M&E system implementation from the perspectives of M&E personnel, systems thinking can assist in identify how people i.e., the M&E personnel and the processes of M&E, form the whole of an M&E system. Furthermore, systems thinking can enhance our understanding of how the M&E system fits in to the broader organisation and the effects it has on various functions including programme improvement, funding prospects and accountability. It thereby provides insight into understanding the linkages between the components needed for M&E systems to be effective in the NPO sector.

2.3. Policy and Legislation

The research study has identified two pieces of legislation and policies linked to the research on NPOs. They are the Non-Profit Organisation Act No.71 of 1997 and the Codes of Good Practice for South African Non-Profit Organisations 2001.

2.3.1. The Non-Profit Organisation Act No.71 of 1997

The Non-Profit Organisations Act No.71 of 1996 is a law that is relevant to the creation and regulation of NPOs. The objectives of the Act are to ensure an enabling environment for NPOs to flourish. To establish administrative and regulatory frameworks for NPOs within which NPOs can operate. It aims to regulate NPOs through creating and maintaining appropriate standards of governance, accountability and transparency and an environment in which the public has access to NGO information (Legal Support Centre, date unknown; Non-Profit Act, No.71 of 1997). Lastly, the Act aims to promote collaboration and partnership within governments and all external stakeholders in their dealings with NPOs (Non-Profit Act, No.71 of 1997). External and internal calls for good governance, transparency and accountability have been drivers for the implementation of M&E within NPOs.

2.3.2. The Codes of Good Practice for South African Non-Profit Organisations 2001

The Codes of Good Practice for South African Non-Profit Organisations 2001 is underpinned by the Non-Profit Organisations Act No.71 of 1997. Developed by the Social Development Department and respective NPO representatives, the Codes of Good Practice is a document that describes what constitutes good practice in the leadership and management of NPOs (Department of Social Development, 2001). Specific reference is made to good governance, administration systems, fundraising as well as the external donor community (DSD, 2001:3). The document aims to ensure that the adoption of the codes of good practice will result in the success and sustainability of NPOs in the South African context. It contends that NPOs have three primary responsibilities: addressing the social needs of the community; ensuring financial and organisational sustainability; and finally, ensuring procedures are in place to ensure accountability and effective management of resources and programmes (DSD, 2001). Monitoring and evaluation are greatly emphasized in the Codes of Good Practice as it is a process that cuts across all three of the main responsibilities.

2.4. Review of Literature

Monitoring and Evaluation is a relatively new concept within the South African NPO context. Therefore, the implementation of it as a tool has been exploratory in nature with mixed perceptions including praise and complaints. This will be the focus of the next section - a critical and comprehensive discussion of the various dynamics associated with the implementation of M&E within the non-profit sector.

2.4.1. Monitoring

Monitoring is defined as “the routine collection and analysis of information to track progress against set plans and check compliance to establish standards. It helps identify trends and patterns, adapt strategies and inform decisions for project/programme management” (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Cross Societies (IFRC), 2011:11). Monitoring processes within organisations can answer various questions depending on the informational needs of the organisation. Some of the key questions monitoring answers are whether outputs lead to achieving outcomes; and the perception of beneficiaries of the programmes. It also asks questions surrounding the activities of the organisation and its ability to lead to expected outcomes and whether the activities of the organisation are being effectively and efficiently implemented based on planning and resources (IFRC, 2011).

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2002a) "monitoring is a continuous function that uses the systematic collection of data on specified indicators to provide management and the main stakeholders of an ongoing development intervention with indications of the extent of progress and achievements of objectives and progress in the use of allocated funds". The process of the collection of continuous data is done by the management of an organisation to track the process and progress of implementation of programmes in accordance with what has been initially planned. The collection of continuous information connects monitoring and evaluation by giving meaning to what has been collected.

2.4.2. Evaluation

Evaluation is defined as "the systematic and objective assessment of an ongoing or completed project, programme or policy, including its design, implementation, and results. The aim is to determine the relevance and fulfilment of objectives, development efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability" (OECD, 2011:7). According to Kusek and Rist (2004), when a monitoring system indicates that activities are off course, excellent evaluative information can help an organisation explain the facts or patterns that have been identified by the monitoring system. Furthermore, whereas monitoring is a continuous process, evaluation is typically planned for specific periods of the programmes lifespan, thus resulting in a variety of evaluation processes that are based on the specific needs of the relevant stakeholders.

The IFRC (2011:13) in their adoption of the OECD's definition of evaluation argues that evaluation involves the process of detecting and reflecting on the effects of what has been done, as well as determining it's worth. Thus, the findings of the evaluation inform the informational needs of internal and external stakeholders which allows for learning and improvements for future interventions. The process of undertaking evaluations within organisations allows questions on impact, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and relevance to be answered (IFRC, 2011).

2.4.3. Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation are two distinct yet interlinked processes. "Whereas monitoring may be nothing more than a simple recording of activities and results against plans and budgets, evaluation probes deeper. While monitoring provides records of activities and results and signals problems to be remedied along the way, it may not be able to explain why a particular problem has arisen, or why a particular outcome has occurred or failed to occur" (Molund & Schill, 2007:10). One of the main differences between these two processes, relates to its timing and its nature. We have discussed that whereas monitoring is a continuous process that allows management with information describing what is happening, evaluation is a periodic process that aims to judge how well a programme has happened; the difference it has made - intended or not (Chaplowe & Cousins, 2016). While evaluation provides evidence as to why goals have been met or not, monitoring systems give management the ability to track a programme's progress over time in accordance to predetermined indicators or targets. In recognising these differences, it is important to understand they are integrally interlinked. Monitoring systems of information ultimately provides data for evaluations, and furthermore, elements taken from evaluations can occur when undertaking monitoring such as assessments (IFRC, 2011).

2.4.4. Monitoring and Evaluation in the NPO Sector

According to the Non-Profit Act of 1997, an NPO is defined as a "trust, company or other association of persons – established for a public purpose; and the income and property of which are not distributable to its members of office-bearers except as reasonable compensation for services rendered" (Non-Profit Act, No.71 of 1997:4). Differentiating in size and type of value they contribute to society, NPOs are created primarily for the goal of organising and supervising social action aimed at addressing and resolving social concerns (Tabaku & Mersini, 2014). As such, the South African NPO sector has long been regarded as one of the critical drivers of social welfare services to poor and vulnerable communities (Patel, 2012; Wyngaard, 2013).

The implementation of M&E as a management tool can be traced to the NPO sector and the rise of programme evaluation (Abrahams, 2015). Programme evaluation is any social intervention intended to meet a recognised social need or to identify a social problem (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). With the sector playing such a pivotal role in service delivery, efforts to ensure best practice and governance of NPOs motivated implementing systems that can be used to ensure accountability to donors and beneficiaries. However, Bornstein (2006) argued that introducing M&E systems to measure accountability increased deception rather than accountability. Donor requirements for M&E systems and tools, such as the logical framework (logframe), mismatched M&E's actual capacity and conceptual standards at the time and were met with suspicion and dismissal (Bornstein, 2006). Bornstein (2006) argues that NPOs were satisfying donor requirements through deceit in their reports to ensure they could maintain funding in a competitive donor pool. In contrast, Abrahams (2015) states that most people who recognise the core objectives of M&E within programme, project or policy initiatives welcome it. While the latter argument suggests that M&E is more accepted in the NPO space than the former and given that M&E in South Africa has gained more recognition for its utility and usefulness, the NPO sector still faces many challenges in its effort to sustain itself and provide desperately needed services to the communities in which they work.

The purposes and benefits of adopting management practices similar to those used in the private sector, such as M&E systems, have enabled organisations to demonstrate their abilities, take accountability for their actions and assist in maintaining and generating funding (Marshall & Suarez, 2014). However, the NPO sector's scale, scope, and diversity make it so that implementing M&E is not without difficulties. Concerns over the viability of the NPO sector continue to centre on the problem of organisational capacity and financial sustainability – both of whom may impede successful M&E implementation (Patel, 2012). According to Wagner's (2019) study, NPOs can only fulfil their mandate if management, leadership, governance, and other components are well-established and continually improved. The ability of an organisation to secure both local and international funding can be considerably enhanced by building and improving organisational capacity. However, the considerable expansion in non-profit organisations in South Africa as they work towards filling gaps in service delivery has made funding more competitive. Maboya's (2017) findings indicate that NPOs' efforts to ensure sustainability revolve around securing a combination of long-term funding; the organisational capacity to develop income generating sources; and a good reputation that allows them to attract collaboration to pursue organisational objectives—all of which are in line with the goals and purposes of M&E. Yet, NPO funding and support are still erratic (Choto, Iwu, & Tengeh, 2020). The threat posed to their sustainability and preservation due to lack of funding and support have resulted in many NPOs scaling back their operations (Bose, 2015). Such compromises may result in organisations reducing their work force or employing less qualified staff to reduce the financial strain of keeping the organisation in operation. These challenges faced by organisations may affect their ability to implement systems required for accountability and transparency, such as M&E, which makes securing funding even more difficult (Batti, 2014).

Whilst, the importance of M&E within the NPO sector is recognised as an important component of the organisation and should be integral in becoming a part of an organisations' culture, and the

NPO culture at large, greater efforts need to be made on supporting the NPO sector financially and pushing the agenda for quality M&E services, through the provision of training organisations and the NPO sector on the importance of M&E, its purpose, tools, and benefits.

2.4.5. The Participatory Approach to M&E

The participatory approach to M&E emerged out of a need to enhance the capacity of local stakeholders' involvement in the M&E process (IFRC, 2011 & Jacobs, Barnett & Ponsford, 2010). It is the emphasis on participation that has distinguished this process from other traditional approaches to M&E. The approach recognises that there are numerous stakeholders who are or should be involved in monitoring and evaluation (Estrella & Gaventa, 1998). Beneficiaries, programme staff and management at all levels, government agencies and donors are examples of stakeholders. The argument for a participatory approach argues that stakeholder participation in M&E may increase the credibility and relevance of information from the M&E system, as well as the process's overall collaboration, support and responsibility (Gorgens & Kusek, 2009 & IFRC, 2011). However, in the opinion of the IFRC (2011), the M&E process may not always be participatory at all levels and should be implemented where it is feasible and appropriate. It is therefore suggested that participation happens on a continuum i.e., the participatory continuum where local stakeholders actively participate in the M&E process at all levels from design to reporting, whilst at the other end of the spectrum, local stakeholders may be restricted in the M&E process to only being recipients of services (IFRC, 2011). Therefore, the degree of involvement of local stakeholders in M&E can vary significantly from programme to programme and NPO to NPO.

2.4.6. Monitoring and Evaluation Systems

Monitoring and Evaluation systems are defined as "a series of policies, practices and processes that enables the systematic and effective collection, analysis and use of monitoring and evaluation information" (Simister, 2009). The system is composed of a number of consists of components that are then organised around a specific purpose (Save the Children, 2009: UNICEF, 2009). In order for the system to be effective in accomplishing its specific purpose, there needs to be a clear understanding between the linkages of the elements in the system. As a result, each step should be regarded as a component of a mutually supportive system that cannot function in isolation (IFRC, 2011).

The IFRC (2011:25) suggests the following six steps to guide planning for and implementing an effective M&E system:

1. "Identifying the purpose and scope of the M&E system
2. Plan for data collection and management
3. Plan for data analysis
4. Plan for information reporting and utilization
5. Plan for M&E human resources and capacity building
6. Prepare the M&E budget"

2.4.6.1. **Identifying the purpose and scope of the M&E system**

The first task in designing an M&E system is to define its scope and purpose - defining what the system is and what it is for (Simister, 2009). It therefore serves to answer the question of why M&E is essentially needed within the organisation and furthermore, how comprehensive it should be. By outlining the system's goals and scope, management can use it as a reference point for making crucial decisions about informational requirements, methodological strategies, capacity development and resource allocation (IFRC, 2011). It is, therefore, clear on how interlinked the steps are to one another as the first step is essentially the foundation of the system. Simister (2009) notes it is important to consider the purpose of the M&E system being designed. It aids in the understanding, ownership and utilisation of M&E information by anticipating key stakeholder's informational needs and expectations (IFRC, 2011).

2.4.6.2. **Plan for data collection and management**

Once the informational needs of the programme have been determined, the following step is to plan for the reliable collection and management of data which would then be analysed and used to address the informational needs of the organisation and its key stakeholders.

The IFRC (2011:32-47) outlines the following steps to be considered when planning for data collection:

- "Develop an M&E plan table
- Assess the availability of secondary data
- Determine the balance of quantitative and qualitative data
- Triangulate data collection sources and methods
- Determine sampling requirements
- Prepare for any surveys
- Prepare specific data collection methods/tools

- Establish stakeholder complaints and feedback mechanisms
- Establish project/programme staff/volunteer review mechanisms
- Plan for data management"

Data management starts as soon as data are acquired, hence data collection and management are closely intertwined. More importantly is the relationship between data collection, analysis and utilisation which is crucial in data management (IFRC, 2011).

2.4.6.3. **Plan for data analysis**

The process of planning for data analysis is the process of ensuring that the raw data that has been collected is converted into information that can be usable. This process shapes the information reported as well as its potential application (IFRC, 2011).

The IFRC (2011:48-56) proposes the following in planning for data analysis:

1. "Develop a data analysis plan, identifying the:
    a. Purpose of data analysis
    b. Frequency of data analysis
    c. Responsibility for data analysis
    d. Process for data analysis
2. Follow the key data analysis stages
    1. Data preparation
    2. Data analysis (findings and conclusions)
    3. Data validation
    4. Data presentation
    5. Recommendations and action planning"

2.4.6.4. **Plan for information reporting and utilization**

After determining a program's informational needs and planning for data collection, management, and analysis, the next step is to plan how the data that has been analysed will be reported and used. The reporting of information is an important step because it identifies what information is reported, when it is reported and to whom it is reported (Kusek & Rist, 2004). Identifying the system's purpose and scope will determine how M&E findings will be used to address the system's informational needs. As a result, M&E reports can serve a variety of purposes, and the data generated can be used in many ways. The IFRC (2011) argue that when planning for information reporting and utilisation, the needs, frequency, formats, and people responsible for these tasks must all be considered. This influences how the information will be used. The most noticeable aspect of the M&E system is reporting; if data is not presented well, it cannot be used effectively. As a result, the system fails to fulfil its intended purpose of providing useful information (IFRC, 2011).

2.4.6.5. **Plan for M&E human resources and capacity building**

Capable personnel are required to support an effective M&E system. It is therefore important to plan for the personnel who will be responsible for undertaking M&E responsibilities in implementing the M&E system. This includes planning for who will be involved in data collection, management, analysis, reporting and training (IFRC, 2011). Kusek & Rist (2004) state that an M&E system should be perceived as a long-term effort by an organisation, and it therefore requires an organisation's ability to sustain these systems.

The following should be considered in planning for M&E human resources and capacity building (IFRC, 2011:69-73)

- "Assessing the programme's human resources capacity for M&E
- Determining the extent of local participation
- Determining the extent of outside expertise
- Defining the roles and responsibilities for M&E
- Plan to manage programme team's M&E activities
- Identify M&E capacity-building requirements and opportunities"

Some of the most common issues in implementing and ensuring the sustainability of M&E systems arise from challenges in the human resources capacity of an organisation. It is crucial to the success or failure of M&E.

2.4.6.6. **Prepare the M&E budget**

Planning for M&E budget of the system is crucial in ensuring that adequate funds are made available for M&E activities. This requires planning to be done very early in the programme's design process as it enables a very detailed budget to be created. Preparing the M&E budget may include but is not limited to itemizing M&E budget needs, incorporating M&E costs into the programme's budget, reviewing whatever donor budget requirements and contributions, and planning for cost contingencies (IFRC, 2011). Whilst preparing a budget for M&E can be conceived to be relatively easy, organisations operate in an environment where donor funding is quite scarce and have to compete with various other organisations to receive funding, often efforts to get funding for the organisations operations undermines funding specifically for M&E or allocating funds specifically for M&E activities to take place (Honu-Siabi, 2015; Bornstein, 2006).

2.4.7 Perceptions of M&E

The perceptions of M&E are likely to influence how it is received within the organisation. Findings from several studies cite M&E perceptions to be influenced by the size and capacity of the organisation to undertake M&E (Mueller-Hirth, 2012; Zulu, 2018). Mueller-Hirth (2012) in their exploration of M&E found that organisations who highlighted the challenges of M&E as a donor expectation, were most likely to view M&E as a tick box exercise as a means to acquire further funding as opposed to Zulu (2018)'s study where participants viewed M&E as a necessity to understand the effectiveness of the work that is produced within their organisation. The necessity of M&E was perceived in a favourable manner amongst participants who expressed the important role M&E played in strengthening the programme and the various components needed to ensure programmes are effective and efficient. From these findings we can see that perceptions of M&E are underpinned by various factors which either hinders or facilitates the improvement of M&E systems being implemented. With this in mind, the reasons why organisations implement M&E systems also vary.

2.4.8. Purposes of M&E

Monitoring and Evaluation systems are implemented within organisations for various purposes and uses (Weiss, 1998). Accountability, according to Ebrahim (2003), is a complex and diverse notion that encompasses not only holding individuals and organisations accountable and responsible but also a mechanism to accept internal responsibilities for developing organisational missions and values. In other words, accountability within organisations can occur in different directions. This may be vertical towards donors and/or horizontal accountability to partners, beneficiaries and employees. Findings from several studies have cited accountability as one of the drivers of M&E system implementation. For instance, Molapo (2019) examined the adoption of M&E systems by various NGOs through a case study approach. The study highlighted the use of M&E as a tool to for accountability to inform the board and donors of the progress and sustainability of programmes implemented as well as accountability horizontally to other stakeholders such as the community within which the organisation operated, parents and teachers through informal reporting channels. Furthermore, in their study on the monitoring and evaluated implemented by the Department of Social Development (DSD) on all funded NPOs within the Frances Baard District, Monyane (2014) presents the view of funders. The study highlights that M&E conducted by DSD is primarily to ensure that funds are being used for its intended purpose as well as to check performance. Whereas the study by Honu-Siabi (2015) study claims that M&E within the NPO served to provide credibility and legitimacy to the work produced by the organisation. This was especially important to the organisation as its vision aims to aid in efforts to alleviate poverty through the introduction and education of a savings methodology in communities. As such, evidence collected through M&E systems provided credibility to their savings methodology in aiding to alleviate poverty in communities. These efforts to display credibility of the organisations work allowed the organisation to also address accountability standards of donors through information provided by the M&E system.

From these studies, we can see the influence of donor expectations on the implementation of M&E systems and how the information needs of donors may influence the type of information collected by organisations to fulfil those requirements. However, from these studies, there is an overwhelming bias towards upward accountability to the point where organisations are ultimately accountable to funders with much less focus on accountability to the communities they serve. As a result, M&E systems may fail in addressing downwards accountability as well as they address upwards accountability (Oswald & Taylor, 2010). The need, however, to show accountability is linked to other purposes of utilising M&E, such as a tool for programme evaluation.

Babbie & Mouton (2001:335) describes the purpose of programme evaluation as the process in which programmes are systematically assessed by analysing the conceptualisation, design, implementation, and utility of social programmes. The use of M&E as a tool allows for the collection of information for organisations to make informed choices for programme enhancement. This allows for the improvement of programmes but also to ensure the sustainability of programmes through continuous monitoring as well as demonstrating accountability to funders that money is being spent reasonable. Findings from the Chibonore (2016) & Zulu (2018) studies highlight that M&E is essentially a tracking device which alerts M&E implementers to changes or concerns within the programme that needs rectification as well as enhancing future project improvements. The need for this tool allows for informed decision making to take place, which allows M&E implementors the opportunity to take the correct measures in adjusting or correcting any flaws for performance enhancement. It is then clear that we can see how M&E systems collect information that can be used internally by M&E implementors to improve programmes through the continuous monitoring of said programmes. However, with this being said, within these studies, monitoring takes a preference above evaluation as monitoring is a process that can be easily undertaken as Zulu (2018)'s study highlighted it as a management exercise that cannot be escaped. This is further supported by Monyane (2014) whose findings highlighted that M&E reports conducted by DSD lack details of the evaluation conducted. It seems then that evaluation is often seen as either a task not within the capability of the organisations or is conflated with monitoring as M&E meaning one process.

Lastly, research findings suggest that M&E serves as learning station for the organisation. Organisations are able to enhance performance and elevate the effectiveness of programmes through the use of continued learning which allows for the organisation to monitor and evaluate the experience of implementation, reflect and analyse these reflections and ultimately take action to address the reflections that have emerged (Oswald & Taylor, 2010). It can, therefore, be said, that the M&E system operates a hub for knowledge production that can be packaged in a way that allows for the distribution of knowledge for those who access it (Chibonore, 2016). The discussion of purposes and uses of M&E demonstrates that M&E purposes fulfil the various information needs of organisations and their stakeholders as well as highlighting the overlapping of purposes. In needs, however, to be taken into consideration that failure to acknowledge the multiple purposes M&E may serve in the organisation allows the possibility for organisations to have gaps in information. Furthermore, lack of communication about the multiple purposes M&E serves, information collected from the M&E system may be insufficient or even disregarded during the data collection phase as there may be a misalignment between purposes of M&E and data that needs to be collected.

2.4.9. Challenges of M&E

With the growth of M&E in South Africa, research has shown that NPOs encounter various challenges in implementation. The first challenge relates to financial constraints of implementing M&E systems. Planning for and budgeting for the implementation of M&E seems to be a major concern for organisations. As M&E is seen as a tool that allows for organisations to show evidence to donors that they are capable of using funds to enhance programmes and produce results, funding determines whether or not the implementation is a failure or a success (Wu, Xun, Ramesh, Howlett & Fritzen, 2010). However, M&E is not a service that donors provide funding for, rather it is an organisational expense that requires management to allocate funds for its implementation. When there is a lack of understanding of M&E as well as support for M&E, funds dedicated towards M&E activities are often scarce or lean, negatively affecting the thoroughness of M&E processes

(Chibonore, 2016; Mueller-Hirth, 2012). With this in mind, we can see how M&E is not an activity often prioritised with gaps between planning and implementation. In order to fulfil its particular purpose, all elements of the M&E system need to be accounted for. With budgeting implications, the sustainability of programmes is at risk as well as possibilities for further funding if organisations are not able to demonstrate M&E proficiency. The financial implications of lack of funding affects issues of capacity. An organisation's ability to implement M&E rests largely on its capacity for implementation.

The demand for M&E within organisations requires the employment of skilled professionals and the ability for capacity building for M&E systems. However, the supply of skilled professionals is considerably low and a lack of harmonized courses and technical advice within the field of M&E in South Africa. This represents the third challenge faced by NPOs in implementing M&E systems. Findings from studies have cited how the implementation of M&E systems are often undermined by the lack of trained professionals. McGill's (2020) study analysed M&E activities within NGOs in the Western Cape through a multi case study approach. The study found that employees tasked with M&E roles and responsibilities often do not possess the training nor the conceptual ability to comprehend their job responsibilities. Furthermore, Mtshali's (2013) study which reviewed the implementation of M&E systems of ECDs within the Gauteng Department of Health, found that in a sample of 20, 11 participants knew about the M&E framework with only 15% of the 11 participants trained on said framework. The demand of M&E is not aligned with the organisations capacity to produce M&E systems that are not characterised by constraints. Whether it be financial, or skilled. It is therefore clear that there is a need for the development of an overall framework of M&E for organisations to provide guidelines on M&E and its implementation as well as the availability of literature and training to equip organisations with baseline knowledge of M&E to materialise its benefits.

Lastly, conceptual challenges represent the third challenge faced by NPOs in that M&E system implementation are hindered by lack of understanding of M&E purposes, terms, roles and responsibilities and tools by relevant employees (Rose, 2014). Lack of conceptual challenges are rooted in M&E as a relatively new tool within NPO management. Monyane (2014) study found that comprehension of M&E was largely determined by education levels, with those who have a post matric education much more likely to grasp M&E as opposed to those with a matric or less. Whereas Ntoynato (2017) highlighted the lack of support by management to create an organisational culture that fosters an M&E understanding amongst all employees. Their study found that many participants deemed themselves not suitable for participation as they were unable to comprehend how their work was related to M&E. From these studies, we can see that it is important for an organisation to spearhead the education of M&E for its employees to realize the full potential of M&E and fulfil its intended purposes. This means an investment into M&E training as well as effective communication between M&E implementors, programme managers and the board.

2.4.10. Benefits of M&E

The design and implementation of M&E systems have beneficial overflows. These may range according to the purpose of M&E system. For some organisations, the information collected from the system allows for the promotion of learning within the organisation and the NPO sector at large (Chibonore, 2016). Whilst others deem accountability as having several benefits that allows the organisation to monitor its progress in achieving the organisations visions and goals as well as ensuring resources are effectively used (Zulu, 2018). Therefore, it can be observed that what an organisation deems as benefits of implementing M&E systems is largely dependent on what the organisation planned to get from the system when they planned and designed it.

2.5. Summary

The review of literature has provided the researcher with information on the similarities within the available studies focussed on M&E within the South African NPO sector. The major findings have been that M&E system implementation varies depending on the organisation, it’s purpose and the experiences of individuals who are tasked with the responsibility of system implementation. Whilst most of the studies have focussed on M&E system implementation using a case study methodology, the studies contribute to a neglected area of NPO research.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

3.1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methods employed in the research study. The research design for the study is described as well as the population and sampling methods. This will be followed by identifying and explaining the data collection method as well as the analysis of data which will be employed in the research study. Lastly, the limitations of the study and the reflexivity of the study is discussed.

3.2. Research Design

This research study adopted a qualitative exploratory research design as its purpose was to explore the perceptions and experiences of implementation of M&E systems within NPOs in the Western Cape. Fouché, Strydom & Roestenburg (2021:633) describes qualitative research as research that seeks to understand the social world – situations, contexts, and people. Additionally, Babbie & Mouton (2001) describes the exploratory nature of a study to provide insight and comprehension, particularly when a researcher steps into a field that is still relatively new. Therefore, a qualitative exploratory approach was appropriate for the research study. The exploratory nature of the study was its focus on M&E system implementation by seeking to understanding the meanings and attitudes M&E personnel place on the implementation of M&E systems within NPOs.

3.3. Population and Sampling

Babbie & Mouton (2011) refer to population as the group (of people) from whom the researcher wants to draw conclusions. This is because it is not possible to study all members of the population that interest us. The study population for the study were NPOs in the Western Cape who have M&E systems in place. The sample selected from the study population were 16 M&E personnel from the Western Cape NPO sector.

De Vos et al (2005) define a sample as a small representative of the whole. For this study, the sampling technique used was non-probability purposive sampling. Non-probability sampling is a qualitative research sampling technique in which units of the population are deliberately selected to reflect "particular features of or groups within the sampled population" (Ritchie & Lewis, 2004:78). A specific non-probably sampling strategy called "purposive sampling" aims to guarantee that all of the important constituencies relevant to the topic are addressed (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003; Fouché et al, 2021).

Purposive sampling is a specific non-probability sampling technique which aims to ensure that all the key constituencies that are relevant to the topic are covered (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). The sample of participants were over 18 years of age; had been employed by the organisation for more than one year or had M&E experience for more than one year to ensure participants had a good understanding of the organisation, its M&E system or M&E systems in general; and/or oversaw the M&E of their NPOs. Only one M&E personnel per NPO was included in the sample due to the capacity challenges of many NPOs in relation to their M&E capability (McGill, 2020; Molapo, 2019). The study initially had focussed on one specific field of development within the NPO sector which was NPOs involved in social, economic and community development. However, this scope limited the number of participants that could be approached and therefore, the study therefore broadened its focus to be inclusive of multiple fields within the NPO sector. The types of organisations involved in the study could be grouped into two NPO sectors, namely the Social, Economic and Development (SED) sector and the Education (learning and training) sector. The first sector included organisations involved in the social, economic and development of individuals and communities. The services rendered by NPOs in this sector are healthcare, hunger alleviation, skills development and community intervention. The latter consisted of NPOs that provide opportunities and services aimed at improving education amongst children, youth and adults. This consists of skills development, early childhood peer mentoring. The vagueness of NPO descriptions aimed to protect the anonymity of NPOs included in the study by ensuring no information was linked to NPOs who participated in the study.

The sample frame refers to the frame from which a sample is drawn (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). This was done using existing sources which are described as the most convenient type of sampling frames and includes administrative records, published lists and survey samples (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). The sample was identified through the use of the South African NPO register database (Department of Social Development (DSD), year unknown) and the Western Cape 2020 list of registered NPOs (Western Cape Government, 2020). These publicly accessible databases provide a list of all registered organisations in South Africa.

The researcher purposefully selected NPOs in the Western Cape from the NPO register based on their own judgement and recommendations of a professional in the NPO field. This was further narrowed down by utilising the Western Cape's 2020 list of registered NPOs. This was largely due to the limitations of the DSD register database. These limitations related to the database being largely outdated by not taking into account NPOs who were no longer active due to COVID-19; as well as the restricting nature of the databases typology of NPOs that excluded certain NPOs who would have otherwise been included. As a follow up measure, the researcher screened NPOs selected from the lists discussed by using the internet to access public websites of the NPOs to determine the inclusion of NPOs in the study based on the existence of an M&E system. This was done by looking at the programmes of the NPOs, annual reports, impact statements and findings. Impact reports of NPOs provided the researcher with evidence that the organisation has tools in place which allows for the measurement of outcomes and indicated the possibilities of an M&E system in place.

A total of 63 NPOs were approached, with many follow-ups, over a five-month period with 16 participants agreeing to partake in the study. This was done by sending emails to the NPOs. The researcher gained access to the NPOs email through the organisation's website. When follow up calls were conducted to NPOs a week after the email had been sent, the researcher was provided with the email address of M&E personnel of the organisation for direct contact in cases where only the organisations email was provided. The email provided an overview of the purpose of the research, the aims and objectives and the research procedures as well as introducing the researcher to potential participants (Appendix B). A consent form was attached to the email with the intention of providing NPOs with the relevant information to assist them in determining whether they would be interested in partaking in the study and whether they meet the criteria for participation. Once follow-up calls were made, the researcher was able to get in contact with M&E personnel and clarify any information regarding the study. Participants who were interested in the study, signed the consent form and emailed it back to the researcher and communication took place to arrange the interviews based on the time that participants set.

The sample size of the study was 16 NPOs. Of the 63 NPOs that were approached, 16 participants agreed to participate. Of the participants who declined to participate, reasons for declining the research invite were of the following nature:

- Lack of staff capacity to participate
- Time constraints
- Lack of M&E personnel

The sample is small in comparison to the population size. However, the sample size will not be considered a limiting factor. Justification of a small sample size is based on a range of factors including, the nature of the study - exploratory studies are studies often conducted on topics which are either new, or under-researched. Mocănașu (2020) states that factors which affects the size of qualitative samples have to do with inconveniences in accessing populations that results in small sample sizes. In the case of this study, the population was a hardly accessible population with M&E being a fairly new field within South Africa and the professionalisation of the sector still in its infancy stages. Therefore, Adler & Adler (2012:9) state that under such research situations, a small number of participates may be very valuable and suitable in representing an adequate number for the research project with an estimation of 6-12 participants being an appropriate sample or whatever many they find. Furthermore, in cases where sample sizes may be restricted due to accessibility, this should not be deemed as imitating and discrediting of the validity of the research. According to Hennink & Kaiser's (2022)'s review of empirical studies to assess saturation in qualitative research findings, saturation was achieved in less than 25 interviews, more specifically between 9 and 17 interviews. They further argue that findings suggest that the 'small' sample size is, in fact, effective for qualitative research as they are able to reach saturation, i.e., the point in data collection at which all significant issues or insights have been extracted from the data. It can, therefore, be argued that the study was able to reach saturation as the sample size was large enough to answer the research questions and objectives, achieve the study's purpose, as well as exhaust the findings until they became repetitive amongst participants, and therefore, the small sample size was justifiable in terms of an appropriate qualitative sample.

3.4. Data Collection

For this research study, the method of data collection was in-depth interviews. The use of qualitative interviews allowed the back and forth that researchers need to explore and engage participants' experiences, perceptions, and the meanings they create of the social world (Silverman, 2013). This is critical in the study, as the topic explored a particular phenomenon and that required gaining access to information about perceptions, experiences, knowledge and motivation of participations and their relationship with M&E systems. The researcher developed a semi-structured interview guide to facilitate the interview process. This is appropriate as semi-structured interviewing allows the researcher and interview design to be flexible and continuous rather than rigid which allows for probing (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

Furthermore, the researcher was able to gain a thorough understanding of the participants' experiences, attitudes, and beliefs related to the implementation of M&E systems through semi-structured interviews. The interview guide (Appendix C) included both direct questions to guide the discussion whilst still allowing the space for the introduction of additional questions that arose during the interview based on responses.

To collect information from participants, 50-minute in-depth interviews were held. The initial intention was to undertake 30- to 45-minute interviews, but early testing of the research instrument revealed alterations needed to be made to the research instrument in order to collect data that would address the study objectives comprehensively. Additional questions and probes were added to the research instrument which extended the time of the interviews from 30 minutes to 45 minutes - 1-hour interviews.

Interviews were done using online mediums such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, WhatsApp video call or Facetime depending on the preference of the participant. The use of online methods for qualitative interviewing is a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The ideal scenario for qualitative interviewing would have been face-to-face interviews, however Covid-19 protocols limited social contact, which thus changed the structure of qualitative interviews to online interviews. Despite this, online methods allowed the researcher to reach participants without barriers of geography with the only costs incurred being that of data or telephonic costs covered by the researcher.

Online interviews were screen recorded and voice recorded with the written consent of participants. To provide an additional layer of confidentiality, participants were given the option of turning off their screens. The researcher screen/voice recorded interviews on Zoom, Microsoft Teams and WhatsApp as well as on recording app on a cellular device for telephonic interviews. The recording app named ‘Voice Memos’ was the built-in recording app on Apple iPhone cellular devices and allowed the researcher to store recordings on their personal device as well as upload it to Google Drive to ensure it was only accessible by the researcher. The recordings of interviews were helpful to the researcher, as it allowed a much fuller record of the discussion rather than taking notes during an interview. Recording also allowed the researcher to be fully present and engage in the interview (De Vos et al., 2005). Interviews were transcribed verbatim to ensure that the data could easily be retrieved in a source that is easy to read and analyse information. The researcher used Microsoft Word to transcribe the interview. Documents on Microsoft Word were linked to OneDrive and Google Drive. This ensured that transcripts were backed up online in the case of an emergency. Furthermore, transcripts and recordings were kept on a password protected computer which ensured that only the researcher had access to it once collected. The data was analysed through the notation for conversation analysis and characterised within a thematic framework for analysis.

3.5. Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is defined as "all forms of analysis of data that was gathered using qualitative techniques regardless of the paradigm used to govern the research" (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:490). The purpose of data analysis is to make sense of the information collected from the research study (Creswell, 2014; Babbie, 2021). It involves a process of what Creswell (2014:245) describes as "peeling back the layers of an onion and putting them back together". The research study employed a thematic analysis for the qualitative data collected. The research study employed thematic analysis for the qualitative data collected. Braun & Clarke (2006:79) describe the thematic analysis approach to qualitative data as a "method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data." This approach was therefore deemed appropriate for the study as the researcher was interested in common themes within the perceptions and experiences of M&E implementation within the NPO sector. Braun & Clarke (2006:79) proposed a six-phase framework approach to the analysis of qualitative data. The six-phase framework approach consisted of the following steps:

Step 1: Familiarising yourself with data (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

The data analysis stage begins with the researcher familiarising themselves with the data that has been collected. Braun & Clarke (2006) state that this phase can be beneficial to the researcher as ideas and identification of patterns may emerge when interacting with the data, i.e., reading transcriptions of the data before the coding process begins. The researcher immersed themselves in the data collected actively, this required the researcher to transcribe the verbal data collected into physical transcripts and reading those transcripts systematically for comfortability and familiarity with the data. This stage also consisted of initial note-taking as the researcher read through the transcripts to identify spelling errors and ensure the transcriptions' formatting was uniform.

Step 2: Generate initial codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

The process of generating initial codes allows the researcher to organise and reduce the information collected in a manner that is more meaningful and manageable (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Upon familiarisation with the data collected, the researcher began generating initial codes by working through the transcripts systematically and identifying aspects that alluded to the possibilities of repeated patterns across the data set. This process consisted of printing the transcripts and using highlighters and Post-it notes to mark data extractions with particular codes or terms. The coded data extracts were collated in a separate file for better data management.

Step 3: Searching for themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

The researcher organised the different codes by re-focusing the data analysis and linking it to the research questions and objectives. This required sorting the different codes into various themes. For this process, the researcher used visual representations such as mind maps and tables.

Step 4: Reviewing themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

The stage of the analysis consisted of the researcher refining and reviewing the themes generated according to their relevancy to the research questions and objectives. The researcher revised themes that did not have enough data to support them and collapsed themes into one another when needed.

Step 5: Defining themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

Once the themes were reviewed, the identified themes were named and defined to capture the essence of the data contained within them. These identified themes are those presented in the analysis of the data and therefore was essential for the researcher to be able to clearly define what the themes are (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Step 6: Writing up (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

The final stage comprised the researcher writing up the final report to provide sufficient evidence of the themes of the data collected to answer the research questions and objectives posed by the study.

3.6. Data Verification

Babbie & Mouton (2001) states that what makes good qualitative research studies is the notion of trustworthiness. Lincoln & Guba (1985, as cited in Babbie & Mouton, 2001) propose the four key elements of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability for ensuring the trustworthiness of good qualitative research.

The first element of credibility aims to determine if the subject of inquiry was correctly identified and described (De Vos et al., 2005). To establish credibility, the researcher provided a detailed description of the methodology, research setting, and participants in order to give an in-depth account how the study was conducted. Firstly, the descriptions aimed to ensure that participants chosen in the study were appropriate as they were the most knowledgeable on the subject matter. Secondly, the research questions, data collection, and analytical strategies were compatible with the qualitative study. Finally, a description of the research environment was necessary to comprehend the context of the data collection process.

The second element of transferability required the researcher to demonstrate whether findings can be used in other contexts/with different respondents (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Fouché et al, 2021). This was demonstrated by giving detailed descriptions of the data collection process as well as the selection of purposive sampling to broaden the scope of specific data.

The third element is that of dependability. According to Babbie & Mouton (2001; Fouché et al, 2021), dependability is the degree to which a research study would produce similar findings if this study were to be repeated in similar environments. The researcher provided thick descriptions of the data collection process. The goal was to present a detailed and precise image of the procedures utilised in the study so that similar results might be attained in the event that it is to be repeated.

Confirmability is the final element. Findings must be the result of the inquiry, not the researcher, to show confirmability (De Vos et al., 2005; Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Fouché et al, 2021). The researcher demonstrated confirmability by establishing a data trail to ensure that findings can be understood as the result of the research study. The researcher recognised reflexivity as a crucial component of demonstrating confirmability, necessitating the researcher to consider their biases and influence on the data collected.

3.7. Limitations of the Study

Sample Frame: The sample frame for the research study was difficult to identify. This is because the NPO database did not provide specific information related to whether an organisation has an M&E system in place or not. Furthermore, working through organisations to identify NPOs who do have M&E systems in place is not easy as the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) aims to ensure that personal information of NPO clients' needs to be protected and therefore organisations cannot haphazardly hand over a list of NPOs to a researcher without confirmation and consent from the NPOs in question.

Sample Characteristics: The sampling characteristics for the sample were very broad. It included participants that were not trained within M&E implementation but held M&E roles within the organisation. This affected findings as there was not a homogenous sample of M&E personnel who were all trained within the M&E field and therefore experience, skills and effectiveness of M&E

systems varied significantly because of this factor. However, in saying that, the heterogeneity of the study sample is an accurate reflection of the state of M&E systems and implementation within the NPO sector. There is no set standard, pattern, or requirement and thus large discrepancies exist amongst the NPOs.

Interview Methods: The use of online mediums to conduct interviews was limiting in that online software such as Zoom, and Microsoft had time limits. When these time limits were exceeded, an additional meeting needed to be scheduled after time had run out. Furthermore, connectivity issues hindered communication between researcher and participant as there was not always time to clarify what was said. Additionally, it constrained the researcher's capacity to interpret participants' meaning from their body language (Chadwick et al, 1984).

M&E resources: The researcher retrieved core M&E resources from 2003 to 2015. The absence of recent M&E resources was limiting. These core resources can, however, be classified as seminal literature as they explained M&E systems and its core components and contributed critical literature to the field of M&E. Therefore, citation of these sources was integral to building the discussion of M&E by citing authors integral to the field of M&E.

3.8. Reflexivity

The selection of qualitative research design requires the researcher to observe the meaning participants attach to the research topic and not the meaning the researcher brings to the research topic (Creswell, 2014). Reflexivity is an important element within qualitative research and requires the researcher to reflect on the ways in which their personal background and their role in the study might affect the way in which their interpretations are shaped, and the way meaning is constructed (De Vos et al., 2005). As a researcher, I was aware of my role in the study and how my personal background can influence my research. I am a Master's student currently doing an internship at an organisation that has tasked me with undertaking a process evaluation of one of their programmes. I was mindful of how my experience engaging in M&E practices within my internship could impact on the research study and I needed to ensure that my experience did not lead to bias in interviews and the analysis of data. I kept a journal to detail my thoughts for reflexivity. To show objectivity, I selected a semi-structured interview to guide the interviewing process which allows flexible question ensuring the meanings participants hold are conveyed. This was my first time conducting in-depth interviews with professionals outside the university setting. As such, it has raised concerns that I would not be confident or eloquent enough to conduct qualitative interviews. To prepare for this, I read literature and articles on qualitative interviewing methods so that I was equipped and knowledgeable about the various factors that should be considered for qualitative interviews. The use of a pilot interview also assisted in improving interviewing skills and refining the research instrument.

3.9. Conclusion

This chapter has provided the research method for the research study with the selection of a qualitative research design to collect information. This has informed the data collection and instruments of the research study of a case study design and in-depth interviews. It has also explored data analysis and the data verification processes which the researcher will undertake, as well as discussed reflexivity for the qualitative approach.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

Chapter four provides the presentation and discussion of the research findings. The themes that have emerged from the research will be discussed and organised according to the research questions that are aligned with the research objectives. Therefore, the presentation of findings and a discussion thereof will be guided by the research objectives posed at the beginning of the study and are as follows:

1. To explore the perceptions of Monitoring and Evaluation systems within Non-Profit Organisations in the Western Cape
2. To examine the positive and negative experiences of implementing Monitoring and Evaluation systems within Non-Profit Organisations
3. To determine the benefits of having Monitoring and Evaluation systems in place in the Non-Profit Organisation sector
4. To understand the challenges of Monitoring and Evaluation system implementation within the Non-Profit Organisation sector

4.2. Sample Demographic

Table 1 describes the sample demographic of the research study and provides an overview of the NPOs included and the roles of participants. Participants were drawn from two NPO sectors, namely the social, economic and development (SED) sector and the Education (learning and training) sector.

Table 1: Description of the Study Participants

Participant NPO	NPO sector	Position held in NPO	Highest qualification
1	SED	Management	Bachelor’s degree
2	Educational (learning and training)	Programme manager	Honours degree
3	SED	Monitoring and evaluation officer	Bachelor’s degree
4	SED	Programme manager	Master’s degree
5	SED	Monitoring and evaluation coordinator	Bachelor’s degree

6	Educational (learning and training)	Monitoring, evaluation and learning manager	Honour's degree
7	SED	CEO	Honour's degree
8	Educational (learning and training)	Director	Bachelor's degree
9	SED	Monitoring and evaluation technical lead	Master's degree
10	Educational (learning and training)	Director	Bachelor's degree
11	SED	CEO	Bachelor's degree
12	Educational (learning and training)	General manager and fundraiser	Master's degree
13	SED	Social work supervisor	Master's degree
14	SED	Director	Master's degree
15	Educational (learning and training)	Monitoring and evaluation lead	Master's degree
16	Educational (learning and training)	Programme manager	Honour's degree

The participant sample included 8 NPOs who operated in the social, economic and development sector and 8 NPOs who operated in the educational sector. All NPOs were located within the Western Cape and partook in M&E system implementation. The sample consisted of 16 NPO M&E representatives. All 16 participants were involved in M&E implementation to varying degrees. Of the 16 NPOs represented, 5 participants occupied M&E specific positions; 5 participants were CEOs/directors of their NPOs, and 6 participants were organisational employees who undertook M&E activities as an added job component.

All participants were in possession of a post matric qualification. Seven (7) of the 16 participants had a Bachelor's degree, three (3) had an Honours degree and six (6) participants had a Master's degree. The experience of participants in the M&E field ranged from that of 1 year to 7 years indicating variation in their experience of M&E.

4.3. Framework for Discussion of Findings

The framework for discussion of findings (Table 2) will provide an overview of the various themes and categories that emerged from the research. This framework was used to structure the presentation of findings.

Table 2: Framework for Discussion of Findings

Themes	**Categories**
4.3.1 Perceptions of Monitoring and Evaluation Systems within Non-Profit Organisations in the Western Cape	4.3.1.1 Defining M&E 4.3.1.2 Defining M&E systems
4.3.2 Purposes of Monitoring and Evaluation systems within Non-Profit Organisations in the Western Cape	4.3.2.1 Supporting and enhancing programme implementation 4.3.2.2 M&E as a tool for accountability 4.3.2.3 M&E as a donor expectation
4.3.3 Experiences of implementing Monitoring and Evaluation systems within Non-Profit Organisations	4.3.3.1 Positive experiences 4.3.3.2 Negative experiences
4.3.4 Challenges of Monitoring and Evaluation system implementation within Non-Profit Organisations	4.3.4.1 Systematic challenges 4.3.4.2 Human resource capacity 4.3.4.3 Financial constraints
4.3.5 Benefits of having Monitoring and Evaluation systems in place in Non-Profit Organisations	4.3.5.1. Programme support 4.3.5.2. Accountability 4.3.5.3. Funding opportunities

4.3.1. Perceptions of Monitoring and Evaluation Systems within Non-Profit Organisations in the Western Cape

The research study set out to explore the perceptions of Monitoring and Evaluation systems within NPOs in the Western Cape. This is because whilst the idea of M&E within South Africa is still considered relatively new to the NPO sector, it is a tool that has become synonymous with accountability, transparency and impact management within NPOs (Abrahams, 2015). The following section will describe perceptions of M&E by participants working in the M&E space within the NPO sector. It will focus on participants' definitions of M&E and M&E systems.

4.3.1.1. Defining M&E

Research suggests that there is no standard definition for M&E, thus resulting in a very broad understanding and definition of M&E (Bornstein, 2006; Gorgens & Kusek, 2009; & OECD, 2002a). It was therefore important for this study to explore how each participant understood and defined the term. One reason behind this is the assumption that perceptions of M&E may ultimately determine how M&E is implemented within organisations. Thus, participants were asked to provide their own definitions of M&E. As expected, the responses revealed a varied understanding of M&E and have thus been organised according to the keyways in which M&E was defined by the participants.

When asked to define M&E, several participants differentiated between monitoring and evaluation in their understanding of the concept:

"…my understanding is quite the general understanding which is that monitoring is about keeping track of the day to day, week to week things to make sure that we are doing things correctly. And then evaluation part is about checking that the things we are doing is having an impact." (Director - participant 10)

"…well, there are two parts of them. Monitoring is the first idea of -- as an organisation that we can effectively gather information to ensure that the - the people who are -- have been tasked to do the jobs have/are in fact doing that and we always try to gather information through narrative reports each month. And then the evaluation part of it is gathering the narrative reports and the registers and then assessing whether we have met our target---our target for that from a quantitative and qualitative basis." (CEO, participant 7)

Other participants described M&E as a tracking device that allows the organisation to keep track of objectives or goals the organisation sets:

"I'd say keeping track of our organisational objectives both for internal and external purposes." (Organisational employee, participant 2)

"For me personally, monitoring and evaluation is where you put down a tangible, measurable component to a set goal or objective." (Director, participant 8)

Several other participants understood M&E as a tool used to ensure effective programme implementation:

"I think from my side, I will look at it as the process of trying to improve programme implementation through the use of data." (Monitoring and evaluation employee - participant 3)

"Yeah, so with us monitoring and evaluation entails that you-you monitor what services you are rendering to your participants, and you evaluate if that service is effective" (Programme manager - participant 16)

Lastly, participants emphasized learning as an integral part of the M&E process when defining M&E:

"I mean I prefer the monitoring and evaluation and learning. You monitor what you do so that's very much at your activities and your - you [are] putting into the world and the changes you're making. The evaluation side is like what difference does it make? To some extent what happened on that side with the beneficiaries and is it the desired impact? Is it measuring up to what you said that you wanted to do-that your programme is wanting to do. The most important part in my mind is also the learning so that whether what you are doing, you're learning from it continuously and trying to improve your programme delivery and finding ways of doing it more effectively." (Director - participant 14)

"…the way I see monitoring and evaluation is that it contains qualitative and quantitative aspects. You know, there you have your structured questions and you have opened-ended questions and then you have, where you just engage with the beneficiaries and staff, and you can learn a lot from that." (Organisational employee - participant 4)

All participants were able to provide a definition for M&E which demonstrates a general understanding of M&E and its basic tenets. At the same time findings also demonstrate a variability in understanding of M&E from very comprehensive to surface level understandings. Analysis of the responses suggest the variations largely relate to the role of participants within their NPOs. Participants who are tasked with M&E roles and responsibilities without prior training provided more a surface level definition and understanding of M&E as opposed to participants who were employed within M&E positions, have received M&E training, or have had prior experience. These findings build on existing evidence of conceptual challenges experienced by participants who take on M&E activities as an added job responsibility within organisations without training nor prior experience (McGill, 2020; Rose, 2014). These results should be considered when understanding the influence that the conceptualisation of M&E can have on the implementation of M&E systems and activities within the organisation. It is important for participants to know the value and purpose of M&E if they are to dedicate themselves to the collection, management, analysis, and reporting of information collected through M&E processes. If those tasked with M&E can understand the value and potential of the work they do, they will be more confident in undertaking tasks related to M&E (Gorgens & Kusek, 2009).

4.3.1.2. Defining M&E Systems

Understanding and defining what M&E systems are was a critical component of the study. This is because the ability to understand and define what an M&E system is and the purpose it serves allows for NPOs to plan and implement a system that ultimately serves its purpose. Most participants were able to provide a general understanding of M&E systems as an interlinked process designed to collect, analyse, report on and utilise information.

Participants defined M&E systems in the following ways:

"…I would say it's sort of the all-encompassing way and which the organisation is able to collect the data to then analyse and track the performance of the programme against a set of, you know, predefined indicators" (Monitoring and evaluation employee - participant 6)

"I would say a formalised system that you have in place, that is recognised by everyone; that everyone is aware of; that everyone is using; and that there's a const--it's a common, If I use the word, commonly accepted and commonly used by everyone" (Director - participant 8)

"Monitoring and evaluation system is a system that is able to monitor daily activities and implementation of programmes and projects to be able to establish the value and the impact that the programme is having. And to see where changes need to be made and to inform various other things." (Organisational employee - participant 12)

"…an M&E system, I guess is a set of processes and tools that help us collect, record, store and analyse data on our programmes." (CEO, participant 10)

From the above-mentioned statements, it is evident that these participants have a clear understanding of what M&E systems entail by highlighting the purpose of the collection and use of data. These findings contribute a clear understanding of M&E systems when comparing it to the definition provided by the study which defined M&E systems as "a series of policies, practices and processes that enable the systematic and effective collection, analysis and use of monitoring and evaluation information" (Simister, 2009). The responses indicate the presence of a systems thinking mindset within their respective organisations as participants were able to provide clarity on their understanding of how different components of the system function to achieve its intended purpose (Acaroglu, 2017). While this was the case for most participants, three participants were unable to effectively define M&E systems. This was especially the case with participants who had no formal M&E training or no experience in the field of M&E. These results should be taken into account when considering the extreme demand for M&E within the sector and the capacity of NPOs to meet this demand. The first step in planning for and implementing an M&E system requires organisations to identify the purpose and scope of their M&E system. This step requires an understanding of M&E, its purpose, the various components which make up the system and how to utilise information generated by the system (IFRC, 2011; Simister, 2009). It can then be argued that failure or misunderstanding in step 1 may hinder the effectiveness and efficiency of the system overall.

4.3.1.3. Summary of Theme 1: Perceptions of Monitoring and Evaluation Systems within Non-Profit Organisations

Participant perceptions of M&E and M&E systems were explored through their understanding and conceptualisation of these two terms. Research findings revealed a general understanding of M&E amongst participants albeit ranging from very comprehensive responses to that of a general and superficial understanding. Participants' understanding and conceptualisation of M&E systems, however, proved to be largely influenced by their M&E background, namely formal M&E training or experience in the M&E field. In this regard, participants who had neither M&E training nor experience, failed to provide a definition for the term or describe its essential components. This is an important discovery, as understanding M&E and its basic tenets is a crucial component of designing and implementing systems that effectively serve it's intended purpose within the organisation. Such perceptions can influence how the manner in which M&E is practiced within an organisation as well as how it is received.

4.3.2. Purposes of Monitoring and Evaluation Systems within Non-Profit Organisations in the Western Cape

According to Weiss (1998), M&E can be implemented for a variety of purposes and uses. The research therefore aimed to explore what purposes and uses M&E served within NPOs. Findings revealed that M&E served several purposes within these NPOs which in certain cases overlapped and informed one another. The purposes of M&E within NPOs were categorised into three emerging themes: Supporting and enhancing programme implementation; a tool for accountability; and to serve the expectations of donors.

4.3.2.1. Supporting and Enhancing Programme Implementation

The introduction of M&E into the NPO field followed a growing requirement of NPOs, government, and donors to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of social service programmes (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Abrahams, 2015). Findings revealed that participants saw M&E as a way to inform programme decision-making and its effective and efficient implementation**.** This was especially emphasized amongst participants who highlighted M&E as a tool that allowed them to make decisions on programme activities and processes that need course correcting.

The following quotes below support the above-mentioned statement:

"…we want to know that what we're doing - helping our beneficiaries to the best that we can and we want to know that our [programmes are] making sense." (Monitoring and evaluation employee - participant 15)

"…main purpose is to be data driven. So, I think that we want to collect the most useful, and accurate information, particularly for routine monitoring purposes so that it can inform our programmes. That you know we are then able to make, use it, to make decisions about how well the programme is doing or how it's not doing well and where we need to course correct; we are then able to use the data to inform us how to do that." (Monitoring and evaluation employee - participant 9)

"…obviously you want to know that your programmes, your interventions, are making a difference and monitoring and evaluation helps to track to what extent they are or aren't." (Monitoring and evaluation employee - participant 6)

The above quotations indicate that M&E is an important tool that assists NPOs in supporting and improving programmes in order to ensure the successful delivery of services for beneficiaries. These findings build on previous evidence which highlighted M&E as a tool for performance management and organisational learning to inform service delivery (Honu-Siabi, 2013; Chibonore, 2016). Therefore, it can be rationalised that the information provided by M&E may have practical implications on the longevity and sustainability of programmes and NPOs by providing constant feedback on the status of programmes. However, this requires the effective collection and management of information that is relevant and needed to inform the decision-making of programme implementation (IFRC, 2011). It therefore requires the dedication and will by management or M&E employees to incorporate learning as an incremental part of the M&E process to allow a space for the analysis of information collected that can be used to inform decision-making.

4.3.2.2. M&E as a Tool for Accountability

All participants highlighted M&E as a tool that allows them to be accountable vertical to donors and horizontally to partners, employees and beneficiaries. The concept of accountability has been a major driver of M&E within the NO sector and these findings therefore build on existing evidence of M&E and its association with accountability (Marshall & Suarez, 2014; Bornstein, 2006).

Participants had the following to say regarding M&E as a tool for donor accountability:

"There's a lot of reasons [purposes of M&E] and then one is actually just - to have to report to our funders and I mean, to put M&E systems, it just makes that easier." (CEO - participant 10)

"...when you think about it, the non-profits don't get their money directly from a customer, you're getting it from someone who's actually wanting to, in essence, buy the impact. So, if you can't say what the impact is, then you don't have a very good product to sell and, not that it's supposed to be a commercial transaction, but in many ways you-you simply cannot fund [NPOs] effectively if you - if you aren't able to see what the impact that you have.' (Director - participant 14)

"...there's a big accountability arm to it [M&E] as well. And so that you can remain accountable to ourselves but also to donors. You're able to meet the reporting requirements and you're able to be sure that the data you are reporting is a true reflection of what's happening on the ground." (Monitoring and evaluation employee - participant 9)

Several other participants highlighted the importance of internal and horizontal accountability:

"The other thing that I'm very weary of is that holding managers of programmes accountable. That we give them ownership of the programme and we give them responsibility

for the programme by having a measurement or an M&E. It's a way of actually holding them accountable as to how they are performing and are they actually achieving our goals? Are they working towards our vision? And so we're able to hold them accountable that way, because there's a saying that goes, 'you cannot manage what you don't monitor." (Director - participant 8)

"…so that you can remain accountable to ourselves but also to donors. You're able to meet the reporting requirements and you're able to be sure that the data you are reporting is a true reflection of what's happening on the ground" (Monitoring and evaluation employee - participant 6)

The following findings highlight the emphasis participants place on demonstrating accountability through information sharing. It is evident from the quotes provided, the system allows non-profits to demonstrate the credibility of the programmes they run by being able to justify how and what work has been completed as well as whether it has gone as planned. This assists organisations in maintaining good relationships with funders as well as ensuring the sustainability of programmes through knowledge sharing. Furthermore, it allows NPOs to display elements of credibility, accountability and ownership. While previous research has focussed on stringent accountability standards for NPOs that are usually established by donors, these results demonstrate mutually exclusive relationships between NPOs and donors (Honu-Siabi, 2015; Monyane, 2014).

Furthermore, these findings also reveal that accountability relationships exist separate to the relationship between the NPOs and donors. These relationships of accountability are concerned with addressing internal accountability standards within the NPO. Findings provide evidence of NPOs making a concerted effort to address accountability concerns internally such as participant 8 who has emphasized the importance of ownership of M&E amongst programme managers. However, reporting standards were still significantly skewed towards ensuring that M&E data collected was used to report to funders and not necessarily to the beneficiaries of the programmes. According to Molapo (2019), local NPOs pay greater attention to demonstrating accountability to donors than International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) adept at addressing vertical and horizontal accountability. Therefore, donors' informational needs can be argued to influence implementing M&E systems within the organisation greatly. The influence of donor relations on an organisation's behaviour aligns with the Resource Dependency Theory, which suggests that an organisation's behaviour is affected by external resources (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Therefore, the organisational decision to adopt M&E as a process can be argued to be strongly influenced by its dependence on donors to ensure programme sustainability and, may unconsciously contribute to a bias in addressing vertical accountability standards to a greater extent than that of horizontal accountability to beneficiaries and organisations themselves. By focusing greatly on external accountability, NPOs in turn mirror private businesses through their adoption of management techniques that allow for them to demonstrate and be accountable for their actions (Marshall & Suarez, 2014). As such, less attention may be placed on informing and providing feedback to the beneficiaries the programme intends to serve, allowing beneficiaries to claim ownership of the experience (Oswald & Taylor, 2012). This, however, can mean that less attention may be paid to inform and provide feedback to the beneficiaries for whom the programme is intended to serve and allow for beneficiaries to claim ownership of the experience (Oswald & Taylor, 2012).

4.3.2.3. M&E as a Donor Expectation

The previous findings have demonstrated that organisations place importance on maintaining funder relations and that leads to the next emerging theme from the findings of the study. Aside from M&E serving as an accountability tool, M&E also serves the purpose of attracting funding. In recent years, donors have placed major emphasis on NPOs demonstrating their ability to undertake M&E as an organisational management technique (Abrahams, 2015).

Participants expressed the obligation of ensuring they have M&E systems implemented to maintain donor relations as well as secure future funding:

"They [funders] are giving money to non-profits. They go, 'Oh, is this non-profit doing this work? But it's all very feel-good stuff but I don't know what they actually achieving', you know what I mean? 'I can't see the results'. And so, they [donors] can't - if they can't see results, they [are] not motivated or excited about giving the money, but if there's M&E's and you can provide empirical data, scientific information or provide concrete results and numbers of what's been done, that gives them a sense of comfort. That there's fruit - that there is - that the organisation is effective and producing results and they prepared to give" (Director - participant 8)

This is similar to what another participant had to say:

"…it's to have an evidence base for that kind of programming and to also make it more attractive for future funding." [Monitoring and evaluation employee - participant 9]

Participant 4, who worked as a donor and resource allocation officer, provided the following opinion from the perspective of a donor:

> *"…how I understand it as a grant maker hey, is - for example what I always ask organisations and you'll be surprised - very few organisations do it - of course there are the good ones who do it hey. Uh, I ask them, 'How cost effective is the services that you render?' You understand? And when I say cost effective, how much does it cost your organisation to render a service to one person, and you can break that down into monetary terms. Some organisations doesn't even bother trying to answer that question."* (Organisational employee - participant 4)

The preceding quotes support Pfeffer & Salancik's (1978) resource dependency approach which argues that an organisation's behaviour is influenced and affected by the availability of external resources. Adoption of M&E activities and systems within the organisation can be argued to be primarily implemented based on the expectation that it will result in an NPO's ability to sustain and retain funding. This is not to say, however, that an NPO does not utilise M&E systems to fulfil other purposes the system is capable of addressing. It does, however, speak to the broader issue of the competitive nature of the NPO sector where NPOs have to compete to secure resources through demonstrations of accountability, transparency and organisational capability (Bornstein, 2009 & Mueller-Hirth, 2012).

4.3.2.4. Summary of Theme 2: Purposes of Monitoring and Evaluation Systems within Non-Profit Organisations in the Western Cape

The findings have explored the various purposes M&E serves within non-profit organisations. Whilst these purposes have been categorised into three themes it is clear that these purposes overlap and inform one another. The information collected from the M&E systems designed and implemented within NPOs allows for the utilisation of data to be used in various ways to support the information needs of the stakeholders of the NPOs. As such, it was found that M&E systems serve the purpose to inform programme decision making, demonstrate accountability of the programmes implemented, and provide credibility to secure and retain funding to sustain the operations of the NPOs.

4.3.3. Experiences of Implementing Monitoring and Evaluation Systems within Non-Profit Organisations

The experiences of M&E systems and activities is argued to significantly frame one's perception of these processes (Mebrahtu, 2002). It was, therefore, one of the research objectives to examine the positive and negative experiences of implementing M&E systems within NPOs. The findings depicted participants expressing both positive and negative experiences in M&E system implementation. These experiences are framed by influencing factors including the training and experience participants have as well as the organisations capacity for M&E such as human, financial and skill. These experiences are discussed in detail below.

4.3.3.1. Positive Experiences

Participants were asked to describe their positive experiences in implementing M&E systems within their organisations. Participants who had received M&E training were occupying their respective organisations first M&E positions. When asked to describe positive experiences, participants responded with the following:

"…the positives of implementing M&E has been uhm, its-the organisation, it's a new role to the organisation. So, I've had the freedom of trial and error processes, creating new processes, new systems, so I've quite enjoyed, enjoyed that. Where I've had the freedom to--to explore the role and to create the role, more or less to how I see fit and how I see best." (Monitoring and evaluation employee - participant 5)

"…there aren't many pre-existing systems. So, we've had to actually like design a few of our systems you know ourselves. I know often that the service providers want you to use Salesforce and things like that, that you can then sort of adjust but in the long run it actually makes more sense to sort of design it from… for yourself so that it can be a bespoke system that really works." (Monitoring and evaluation employee - participant 9)

Another participant described this experience as both a positive and negative:

"I mean this is both a positive and a negative was that I had to build the systems myself. So, there were no systems. So, I mean, in some ways, I had to make it up as I was going along. But in other ways, the great thing about that is that you can constantly innovate. And so, the systems don't

have to be static because they haven't existed for ages, and you don't have to consult a million people to improve them." (Monitoring and evaluation employee - participant 6)

From the above findings, it is evident that participants were able to be creative and innovative with M&E due to the newness of its role in the NPO. This meant that participants had the freedom to design and play around with building systems from scratch which could be tailored and adjusted to the real-world context. These findings conform with the influence of M&E on the sector. It has become expected of the sector to demonstrate M&E capability which is validated by the findings of M&E being a relatively new role within the NPOs that took part in this study (Mueller-Hirth, 2012). As such it has opened the space for M&E as a qualified profession within the NPO sector. It has thus become a factor that NPOs need to think about and adopt considering the demand for demonstrating M&E capability which may result in NPOs benefitting from not only funding opportunities but also affords them credibility in their service delivery.

Furthermore, participants expressed receiving feedback and observing informed decision making within the organisation as one of the positive experiences of implementing M&E systems within their organisations.

Participants described these experiences in the following quotes:

"I think in terms of the positive side, it's really rewarding when you see your feedback being integrated into future planning. And a lot of that - just my experience - has to do with having a user focus and trying to have as much - as data visualisation incorporated into your feedback as possible because people like that" (Monitoring and evaluation technical employee - participant 15)

"…it changed the way we work as an organisation. Nobody had the excuse of making decisions that were not based on real information." (Monitoring and evaluation employee - participant 6)
"Well, when we're wanting to make programme changes and we'll definitely look at M&E data that we collected [on] that particular programme to see what is the benefit and what isn't, and how do we use the information that we collected in order to either improve programme design or redesign…" (Director – participant 14)

The preceding findings have highlighted the importance placed on M&E systems as a feedback mechanism that allows for the sharing of valuable insight and information for the monitoring and evaluation of programmes or projects of the organisation. These findings contribute to the organisational learning of NPOs and contrast the results of Molapo (2019) whose findings suggested INGOs are essentially more competent for engaging in organisational learning generated from M&E systems than local NPOs. While the findings suggest that donor demands heavily influence M&E systems, NPOs can utilise information collected from these systems to inform learning. This aligns with systems theory, which suggests that a systems thinking mindset within organisations can produce feedback loops that may guide changes or decision-making as information about the interconnectedness between parts of the system becomes available (Acaroglu, 2017).

Various tools emerged among participants which assisted in the collection, analysis, and management of information. Online systems, Excel spreadsheets, and software was utilised by many participants hoping to streamline data to ensure reliable and timely information.

When asked what tools or software the organisation uses in its M&E activities, one participant said:

"We predominantly use Salesforce. —we have a customised CRM system […] it's a CRM system that has been customised for our purposes with regards to M&E. And then we also use Microsoft Office. So, we use teams quite extensively for data collection and processing, and storage in addition to Salesforce. And then we also use Stoplight, not sure if you're familiar with the Greenlight tool. But it used to be called Poverty Stop Light now it's the Greenlight Office South Africa but it's an international tool that basically looks at indicators of persons quality of life and we would implement that when new beneficiaries join our campuses." (Organisational employee – participant 2)

Another participant said:

"Okay so we as an organisation work on google workspace. And because we are an education organisation, we benefit from the free google for education licenses. Because obviously we don't have budget to pay google prices for things. And so that's what we work on. All of our databases are essentially - are based in google sheets." (Monitoring and evaluation employee – participant 6)

Another participant said:

"So recently we [moved to] Salesforce. We had a different database when I started and that's the main [house] that we using to store all our data but We also generally use like sheets, google forms etc to collect some data, [inaudible] if its, if there's really a short time between the intention and when we need a form, we'll sometimes use [inaudible]. Those will be the two main ones." (Monitoring and evaluation employee – participant 15)

The above quotations demonstrate that organisations planning for the collection and management of data utilise various tools and software in their pursuit to address the informational needs of their own and key stakeholders. The tools and software used by organisations ranged from very basic i.e., spreadsheets to ensure ease of use and ease of access, to sophisticated software such as Salesforce. The use of software such as Salesforce has been highlighted by participants in aiding their efforts to ensure that the relationship between data collection, management, and analysis is efficient so that data can be effectively analysed and used as information (IFRC, 2011). For organisations that highlighted financial constraints which will be discussed, using Excel sheets allowed them to collect the information that was necessary for their informational needs whilst simplifying the data collection instruments, which in turn minimises the cost and burden on the organisation's financial sustainability.

Lastly, all participants expressed the participatory nature of implementing M&E within organisations as a positive experience. Considering that only five organisations employed M&E personnel, the participatory nature of M&E implementation is seen as a way to ensure that M&E systems can be maintained by dividing roles and responsibilities amongst staff and allowing for communication, accessibility and use of data across the organisation.

One participant had this to say:

"…it's not just a 'me' process, it's an 'us' process. So, I think that people are much more willing to take part in that. I'd say that the groundworkers now, they do own that data collection process compared to before - when I joined, where it was like you know, 'this is not my job'." (Monitoring and evaluation employee - participant 3)

Another participant supported this by stating the following:

"I kinda expect, not kinda -- expect that everybody on the team and when I've hired people to join my team, it was part of the requirement that they have a decent exposure and understanding and experience of M&E because we were not in a position to have a dedicated M&E person. So that's the one that there's an expectation that everybody knows -- has an idea and can do the basic stuff." (Director - participant 10)

The use of a participatory approach within NPOs allows for the organisation to develop collaboration and consensus at different levels which enables a greater understanding of the purpose and impact of programmes (Estrella & Gaventa, 1998). This is highlighted by participant three who explores gaining consensus between themselves as an M&E officer and the groundworkers who would essentially be a part of the data collection for M&E systems and working collaboratively. The participatory approach has various implications for NPOs such as building local capacity and ownership of employees that can sustain the programme, however, it is largely contingent on the support and resources dedicated towards building the capacity for a participatory approach internally (IFRC, 2011). An NPO must be in possession of someone who can take charge of the participatory approach. This requires an employee to have at least an understanding of M&E and the skills to set up the systems as they will essentially guide the learning and training process to build the capacity for the participatory approach. Considering this takes time and money, it is often a challenge.

4.3.3.2. Negative Experiences

Participants provided various accounts of negative experiences they have encountered in implementing M&E systems. Findings that emerged were related to donor expectations, the management and collection of data as well as a lack of clarity and guidance on M&E systems. When asked about their experience of implementing M&E systems, participants highlighted one of their negative experiences as the lack of existing M&E systems which is the opposite to what other participants described as a positive experience.

One participant expressed this with the following statement:

"...so, I think majority of it is not knowing if we have an M&E system in place. It's just kind of doing what you think is M&E - it might not be M&E at the end of it." (Organisational employee - participant 13)

This is supported by participant 5 who responded with the following:

"…the challenges were like I mentioned to you, 'am I on track', 'am I ticking all the boxes', 'are we collecting the data to the best of our ability' / Sometimes it can be challenging because I'm not answering or giving her [the fundraiser] the information the way she wants it or the way she needs to write it." (Monitoring and Evaluation employee - participant 5)

The responses from participants highlighted the lack of existing M&E tools within the NPO sector that can guide or facilitate its implementation. Lack of existing M&E systems were seen as a major concern for participants when implementing M&E within their organisations often times with participants who lacked training or experience within the M&E field. Whilst there is a national evaluation policy framework for government, the NPO sector is devoid of any policy framework which may guide monitoring and evaluation. Legislation and policy concerning the management of NPOs comprise the NPO Act No. 71 of 1997 and the Codes of Good Practice for South African Non-Profit Organisations 2001. These two documents govern the functioning of NPOs in South Africa and provide the appropriate standards on governance, administration, and accountability of NPOs. However, they lack material on how to assist and inform M&E which has become a major demand from funders, including the DSD. As a result, it can be a daunting task for NPOs who cannot afford M&E employees but require funding that is largely dependent on M&E proficiency.

Furthermore, of the participants who undertake M&E as an additional employee responsibility, four of them reported that whilst they are able to provide information to stakeholders on M&E, it is not an activity that shapes the day-to-day operations of the NPO or that is necessarily carefully thought through and planned.

Participants expressed the following:

"It's a time and capacity thing - that we may have enough of the expertise, but we don't really have the time to get to all of the data and to figure out what it means and so on." (CEO - participant 10)

"…so, to be honest, I don't think it's something that we have in mind when we doing what we do. I think we just do. I think without even thinking about M&E. I think the only time that we have to

worry about M&E is like last minute maybe when -- because we are funded by the Department of Social Development so when they come and do the M&E, that's when we are like, 'okay let's look what they need to have in place.' (Organisational employee - participant 13)

"…it should have a bigger effect [M&E] but because we don't have one person that only focuses on that, it's not enjoying the time and energy that it has to... At this point we are just doing the documents and getting it back. So, it's not really as informative as it should be." (Programme manager - participant 16).

The latter findings are evident that in certain cases M&E planning does not happen alongside programme planning but rather as a separate task. This is because undertaking M&E requires planning for the time, resources and personnel who will be involved in M&E activities which is not the case for NPOs who do not have the HR and financial capacity to employ full-time M&E employees. These findings support Mueller-Hirth's (2012) argument that suggest M&E is often done as a "tick-box" exercise to appease funders and fulfil donor requirements to access further funding. The practical implications suggest the M&E systems may not be executed to its full potential and may not be seen as a vital tool within the NPO.

Lastly, participants expressed their experience and encounter in dealing with the collection and management of data. Participants have described various methods for data collection and because these vary as there is no one size fits all in the NPO sector, collecting and managing the data for programmes have resulted in complex and complicated experiences for some of the participants of the study.

One participant had this to say:

"…there is a difficulty or delay in information in and information out or the learning side out which is what I'm into. That is really something which I'm trying to pay attention to and to get…to concentrate on less information, less data but then more learning as well." (Director - participant 14)

Another participant said:

"…I mean it was really useful but once it [the M&E system] was set up, we needed to socialise it within the team and get everyone on board with using it. And when people didn't use it, then it automatically became sort of outdated because as you use the system, you realise but oh 'this question is silly' 'this datapoint, you know, doesn't make sense we need to change it' but if we're not regularly using it, it becomes outdated and becomes not useful tool. And then I mean, I guess like with everything… garbage in, garbage out. So, if we not capturing things properly, then it doesn't make a lot of sense." (CEO - participant 10)

Participants responses highlights the importance of the data collection and management process of the M&E system. Participants express their difficulty in obtaining information in a timely manner that will allow them to make decisions in real time. According to the IFRC (2011), planning for the reliable collection and management of data that can be efficiently analysed and used as information is critical for the system's effectiveness. As a result of the delay in data analysis, information may become outdated and thus incapable of informing decision making and learning within the organisation (Acaroglu, 2017). The lack of interaction between the various parts of the system may result in a system that fails to fulfil its purpose and produce results (Turner, 2011).

4.3.3.3. Summary of Theme 3: Experiences of Implementing Monitoring and Evaluation Systems within Non-Profit Organisations

The experience of study participants in implementing M&E systems highlighted both positive and negative experiences. The positive experiences were associated with the newness of M&E activities and processes within organisations that allowed participants' creative freedom to design and customise M&E systems based on the needs of the organisation. Other participants highlighted the practicality and usefulness of M&E systems that allowed for constant feedback to inform decision-making for the effective and efficient management of programmes. Participants also demonstrated the variance in tools and software utilised in the collection, management and analysis of data. Furthermore, positive experiences were also expressed by highlighting the participatory nature of M&E system implementation that allowed for M&E systems to be useful to all stakeholders. With regard to the negative experiences of M&E system implementation, some participants associated the lack of M&E tools and plans within the NPO sector as hindering – this was especially the case for NPOs that did not have the resource and financial capacity to undertake M&E. In other cases, participants expressed the lack of impact M&E systems had on the day-to-day operations of the NPO as it was largely an activity done to fulfil donor requirements and expectations as opposed to influence programme activities. Lastly, negative experiences were associated with the challenges of the collection and management of data that hindered the reliability of information generated from the M&E system.

4.3.4. Challenges of Monitoring and Evaluation System Implementation within the Non-Profit Organisation sector

The fourth objective was to explore the challenges faced by participants in the implementation of monitoring and evaluation systems within their NPOs. With the emergence of M&E as a professional practice, various challenges have emerged from research undertaken within the M&E field (Chibonore, 2016 & Ntoyanto, 2019). While much previous research has employed a case study methodology, this research study set out to explore challenges faced by M&E practitioners in their implementation of M&E systems across various NPOs in the Western Cape. This was to explore whether there are variances amongst roles & responsibilities as well as types of NPOs. By exploring the challenges faced in the M&E sector, the study can provide valuable information to the practitioners as well as generate solutions on how to overcome them. All participants reported experiencing challenges to a certain degree in implementing M&E systems within their organisation. Several themes emerged in relation to challenges experienced, including system challenges, human resource capacity, and financial constraints.

4.3.4.1. Systematic Challenges

Systematic challenges were highlighted by participants who experienced various challenges related to the implementation of M&E systems. These challenges related to the collection, management, analysis and reporting of data.

The following quotes support the above-mentioned statement:

"…I found that I was sitting with the information and not regularly going back to the organ-uhm to the managers and being like, 'okay guys, there are your stats – the numbers are low. What are you going to do to make it different?" (Monitoring and evaluation coordinator – participant 5)

"So, we never created reports on it. We keep it on file with the clients' information and stuff as well. I think that's one thing that we should definitely look into, in terms of analysing the data. We don't analyse the data at all. We just collect it and [inaudible], 'oh okay, here we go.'" (Organisational employee - participant 13)

These sentiments were echoed by other participants:

"…it takes quite a lot of time and effort in order to get data into the system and before you can actually start working at it and analysing it." / "I think the biggest thing is around the data collection because we're getting so much data and how do we manage to get it to a point where we can analyse it fast." (Director - participant 14)

"I think we could be more- our system could be more effective in being able to get data immediately… it's always is a 'let's go back and quickly check what was the last updated one, how long has- ago and lets ask when last did you ask for this information. So it's always a bit of a rush and a bit of an urgency to get the numbers out. We don't have it on hand." (Organisational employee - participant 12)

From these findings it is evident that participants experience various challenges which impede the functionality of the M&E system. These challenges largely related to managing the data once is has been collected. The design and purpose of a M&E system should enable NPOs to access reliable and timely information when planned for correctly. Findings may suggest that participants who experience challenges in reporting, such as participants 5 and 13, may affect the usability of information. Reporting is the most visible part of the M&E system as it is the tangible result of the system's activities (Kusek & Rist, 2004). The inability to communicate the results to stakeholders who may find value in the information can be seen as a considerable waste of time and resources it took to collect data. This renders the information valueless and undermines the purpose of the M&E system. The systematic challenges explored by participants and lack of interconnectedness between the various components of the system to function effectively and efficiently contradicts the notion of systems theory which relies on the interconnectedness of systems to effectively function as a whole (Acaroglu, 2017; Bertalanffy, 1968; Turner, 2011).

Participants who highlighted challenges related to data collection and analysis tools expressed the time-consuming nature of keeping the M&E system online. That is, a system that is reliable which can produce timely, relevant and consistent information. The collection and management of data is a vital component of the M&E system which allows for NPOs to meet the informational needs of the system (IFRC, 2011). However, this is a step that relies heavily on the capacity of the NPO to undertake the management of data. These findings suggest that collection challenges result largely on the lack of support and planning needed for M&E. This affects the reliability and use of the information provided by the system. If information is generated for external reporting requirements, NPOs can make do and resolve these challenges by getting to it eventually. However, NPOs who rely on the system to inform programme support and implementation may suffer due to the inability of the system to produce timely information that can influence the progress of programmes in real time.

4.3.4.2. Human Resource Capacity

The issue of human resource capacity was one of the challenges highlighted by ten participants. Capacity challenges varied amongst NPOs who had M&E personnel and those who did not. All participants expressed feelings of being overwhelmed by the workload necessary to ensure M&E systems work effectively.

Participants employed in M&E positions stressed the need for HR capacity to manage the workload that an M&E system requires to be effective:

"…I think internally the main thing is the difficulty in finding the skill and then also like I said, like a relative -- there's such a high workload and so you almost always need more staff to be able to do the work so that then staff also have the time to be able to upskill themselves so that you can bring those skills in house." (Monitoring and evaluation employee - participant 9)

"Okay, so capacity in terms of we have a whole lot of programmes that we constantly must track and assess and evaluate. And whilst kind of the team is structured to be able to meet those requirements but when another big project comes along and suddenly, we need to conduct a big, larger scale evaluation on that project, the current team as it stands doesn't have the capacity to leave their posts essentially and focus on something else." (Monitoring and evaluation employee – participant 6)

"…in order for me to fulfil my role effectively, like I said earlier, in reporting back and doing all the finer details I think man capacity would be needed because sometimes the role of the data collection and data analysis can take time and then I don't get time to do the other things" (Monitoring and evaluation employee - participant 5)

Whereas participants who were tasked with M&E responsibilities in addition to their job role expressed the following sentiments regarding HR capacity:

“I think M&E is probably a role that -- it should be independent and should be a, you know, a full person -- for carrying that on I think to really sustain an organisation such as ours. Uhm and unfortunately, it falls under almost a third of someone else’s role.” (Organisational employee - *participant 12)*

” So, obviously the human resources [laughs] there isn’t, you know…but specifically just focussed on uh M&E and sometimes it’s also the availability of the data that you need for proper M&E because sometimes the staff don’t always [have] the time to - *to be doing M&E. They are more focussed on service delivery as well.”* (Organisational employee - *participant 13)*

“I think internally it’s just availability of staff and the funding to appoint somebody that will solely be responsible for the M&E side, so internally that’s a constraint.” (Programme manager *- participant 16)*

It can be thus seen that the majority of participants in the study experienced challenges related to the human and skill capacity needed to implement M&E systems. Limited time and human resource capacity was seen to have various effects, with participants in M&E positions encountering challenges related to managing the M&E workload alone as opposed to organisational employees who struggled in managing the M&E workload alongside their other job responsibilities. The issue of skill and human constraint is not a new one to the sector (Mtshali 2013, Chibonore 2016). However, it can create an environment that contributes to negative perceptions of M&E due to the extreme workload required to maintain the system and produce valuable results (Gorgens & Kusek, 2009). These negative perceptions can influence how M&E is viewed within the NPO and can hinder employees from seeing how it may be beneficial for the work they engage in.

4.3.4.3. Financial Constraints

Planning and budgeting for M&E is seen as a critical component in the implementation of M&E systems (IFRC, 2011). This was a challenge highlighted by four participants who expressed the limitations of M&E implementation due to financial constraints. This challenge looked different to all participants depending on their role, the NPO’s budget for M&E, and the design of the system.

Participants who were employed to set up M&E systems described financial challenges such as:

"…the budgets within the not-for-profit sector are, you know, you can budget all that you want but whether you will get uhm you know…funders are generally not overly thrilled for funding salaries but at the same time somebody has to be doing the work, making the phone calls and putting those reports together" (Organisational employee - participant 2)

"…we have to -- the limitations on using the cheapest data collection tools possible, you know, giving people data so that they can give us feedback. If they don't have data, trying to make all of our things available on a data free website so that people can use them and fill in the forms and that sort of thing." (Monitoring and evaluation employee - participant 6)

Whereas participants with no M&E budgets described financial challenges as being:

"…a lot of it goes back to the fact that the funding is restricted funding. So, its specific things that we must spend money that doesn't take into account the other things that the organisation might need or require to be able to execute projects correctly. It's limiting in a way in terms of what the donor is expecting you to do and what you need to do for a successful project to run." (Organisational employee - participant 13)

"…so, we get funding from that [DSD] but we don't get specifically funded for an M&E officer or an M&E, you know, M&E data or software development. So we don't get funding for that specifically." (Programme manager - participant 16)

The quotations above provide insight into the perceptions of M&E within NPOs which are influenced by the absence or limitation of funds dedicated to M&E. The budgeting and planning for M&E system installation impacts the success or failure of the implementation process to some extent (Wu, Ramesh, Howlett & Fritzen, 2010). Participants highlighted the restricting nature of funding or lack of funding dedicated towards M&E activities within the NPO. This is significant as M&E is a common donor requirement and yet is something donors are not willing to provide funding for as participant 2 has suggested. M&E systems may suffer due to lack of funding which can influence how data is collected, whether it can be analysed and who reports it.

4.3.4.4. Summary of Theme 4: Challenges of Monitoring and Evaluation Systems within the Non-Profit Organisation Sector

The research findings revealed that participants of the study encounter various challenges in their implementation of M&E systems within their organisations. These challenges have been highlighted as systematic challenges which may influence the reliability and usefulness of the information collected from the M&E system. Furthermore, participants also highlighted the restrictions placed on M&E system implementation due to human resource capacity challenges. Lastly, participants expressed the challenges financial constraints have on planning and budgeting for M&E activities and processes within the organisation that are either restrictive or absent and affect the implementation process.

4.3.5. Benefits of having Monitoring and Evaluation Systems in Place in the Non-Profit Organisation Sector

Determining the benefits of having M&E systems in place in NPOs was one of the research objectives of the study. The purposes for M&E system implementation are influenced by internal and external needs, and it was therefore important to explore whether NPOs do, in fact, benefit from implementing such systems. Several categories emerged when discussing the benefits of employing M&E systems, including programme support and implementation, accountability, and funding opportunities.

4.3.5.1. Programme Support and Implementation

Participants who were asked about the benefits of having M&E systems in place highlighted programme support and implementation:

"So, the main benefit would definitely be, like I said you know reviewing, looking - like bolstering what's working and improving what hasn't been working. Because at the end of the day we want our beneficiaries to benefit from the programme." (Monitoring and evaluation employee - participant 15)

This sentiment was echoed by another participant who said:

"The main benefits are just, I mean, the big one is that you, you know whether you're on track or not. You know whether what you're doing is working. So, I think its again taking us back to like

you can be data driven to improve your programming. It makes your programmes more impactful." (Monitoring and evaluation employee - participant 9)

These participants expressed M&E as being a beneficial tool which allows them as M&E employees to utilise information collected from the system to inform decision making that will in turn support the implementation of their programmes. These findings corroborate findings from Zulu's (2018) study which found M&E to serve as a learning tool for the NPO, which assists in operational and programme design making through the provision of appropriate information from the system which thus serves as a feedback loop. As such, NPOs benefit from these systems that can support and sustain the lifespan of programmes as well as, in turn, benefit beneficiaries whose needs and feedback are taken into consideration when delivering services. This may then directly translate into addressing efforts addressed in improving NPO best practices, governance and accountability standards to both donors and beneficiaries.

4.3.5.2. Accountability

Participants also highlighted vertical and horizontal accountability as a major benefit of M&E system implementation:

"Being accountable is the main one [benefit]. So, do you actually know what's happening? You know? Who has a handle on what's happening? And is it being recorded so that you can account to people and maintain your reputation to the people you are serving and to the people that are funding your work." (Monitoring and evaluation employee - participant 6)

This sentiment is expressed by another participant:

"…we owe it to the donor and to be the public to be placed under scrutiny to show basically that whatever we've spent on in terms of cash or kind, [breaking up], in terms of the agreement between us and the donor because we are providing a public service for the private sector. So, you know, that is a very critical component of what we do." (Organisational employee - participant 1)

The preceding quotes acknowledge accountability as a major benefit of M&E system implementation. These systems allow NPOs to use information collected from the system to showcase their work and impact. It builds on previous findings by Zulu (2018) & Honu-Siabi

(2013) which found accountability to be a tool used for internal and external accountability that not only benefits external stakeholders to show the way resources have been managed and that requirements have been fulfilled, but also serves as an accountability framework within the NPO to hold themselves accountable for the work they do and are responsible for. This can lead to boosting morale amongst employees who understand the value of M&E and their role and responsibility within the system.

4.3.5.3. Funding Opportunities

Participants highlighted the benefits of M&E implementation in relation to funding. When asked what the benefits of implementing M&E systems, one participant had this to say:

"The fact that we've got M&E in place, and we can show donors what we do and what we achieve, it definitely attracts funding." (Director - participant 8)

This is shared by participant 12:

"...for funding appeals to say this is the impact we're doing and our monitoring and evaluation, this is who we are. Uhm and actually give proof of that because there's just, doesn't seem to be set proof of what we do, and I do believe we're doing a lot." (Organisational employee - participant 12)

Participants express that implementation of M&E can be financially beneficial to their NPO. The data collected from the system is used to fulfil the reporting needs of the NPO stakeholders which include funders. The ability to showcase their work allows for NPOs to maintain their relationships with funders and retain funding needed to sustain the programme. The ability of NPOs to report on the efficacy of their work can influence their ability to attract funding opportunities. Whilst previous studies have focussed on donor constraints and demands influencing the relationship between NPOs and funders, these findings demonstrate that having effective M&E systems in place and utilising the data meaningfully, NPOs are able to maximise their relations with external stakeholders (Mueller-Hirth, 2012; Simister 2006). NPOs can include information collected in fundraising proposals calls to demonstrate capability and the credibility of their work as an NPO thereby increasing chances of funding opportunities.

4.3.5.4. Summary of Theme 5: The Benefits of having Monitoring and Evaluation Systems in Place in the Non-Profit Organisation Sector

The benefits of having M&E systems in place were directly linked to the purpose and influence of M&E within the organisations. Thus, the benefits experienced by participants varied as the purpose and influence for M&E implementation differed across NPOs. Kusek & Rist (2004) state that the design of M&E systems and its purposes can result in beneficial spill over effects. Participant responses demonstrated M&E systems can be beneficial for NPOs despite the challenges they may encounter in its implementation. As such, benefits of M&E system implementation varied amongst participants from programme support and implementation, to upholding and maintaining accountability standards within and outside of the organisation, as well as maintaining and creating funding opportunities.

4.4. Summary of the Chapter

Chapter four presented a discussion of the findings of the study which highlighted the key themes which emerged from the data gathered during interviews. Findings were organised according to the various objectives set out in the study. The findings suggest that the experience of participants is similar yet diverge on various issues. It was clear from findings that M&E may serve multiple purposes within NPOs and these may overlap depending on the focus of the NPO and the priority they place on certain information needs. The challenges encountered by participants were all different but were all factors which affect the functionality and effectiveness of the system to certain degrees. Lastly, findings demonstrated that despite the dominate donor focus of M&E, NPOs are able to benefit from the implementation of M&E systems through utilising the system to meet its needs.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

Chapter five provides the conclusions which have emerged in relation to the research questions and objectives posed by the research study. The study explored the perceptions and purposes of M&E in NPOs, the experiences faced by participants in implementing M&E systems, as well as the challenges and benefits that accompany the implementation of M&E systems. The chapter also provides recommendations for M&E system implementation for M&E employees and NPO management as well as possible areas for future research within the field of M&E.

5.2. Main Conclusions

The main conclusions for the study have been organised according to the research objectives of the study. Thus, for each research objective, a number of key conclusions have been drawn.

5.2.1. Perceptions of Monitoring and Evaluation Systems within Non-Profit Organisations in the Western Cape

The perceptions of M&E within NPOs in the Western Cape were explored through the understanding of terms centred around the M&E system.

Defining M&E

- Within the NPO sector, there is a general understanding of what M&E is as well as its purposes, however, understanding amongst participants differed according to their level of M&E training, experience, and how specific of an M&E role they had within their organisations.
- All participants in the study were involved in M&E implementation within their organisations to varying degrees and thus their understanding occurred along a continuum from a very comprehensive understanding of M&E to a very basic and surface level understanding of M&E.

Defining M&E systems

- The majority of participants were able to provide a definition and understanding of M&E systems and its components. Participants who were unable to provide a definition for M&E systems or understand the concept, generally had no formal M&E training. Therefore, it is put forward that the inability to understand and describe the various components of an M&E system may influence the planning, designing, and implementation of activities and processes needed to collect information that is not only timely but also reliable for the organisations their key stakeholder's use.

5.2.2. Purposes of Monitoring and Evaluation Systems within Non-Profit Organisations in the Western Cape

Findings highlighted that M&E systems were implemented to fulfil various purposes within the NPOs of the research study. These purposes were as follows:

Supporting and enhancing programme implementation

- The research findings established that the M&E systems within organisations were used as tools that allow for organisations to retrieve the necessary and relevant information to assist participants in making informed decisions. In doing so, participants were able to support and enhance the implementation of programmes through the use of the M&E systems that acted as a feedback loop for programme performance.

M&E as a tool for accountability

- Findings highlighted that maintaining and demonstrating accountability standards were primary motivators for M&E systems within organisations. These standards of accountability occurred vertically to donors and horizontally to employees and beneficiaries.
- Whilst findings presented evidence of vertical and horizontal accountability, accountability relationships were however still greatly skewed towards addressing and ensuring accountability standards to donors as opposed to employees and beneficiaries.

M&E as a donor expectation

- The information collected from the M&E systems within organisations were used as a primary mechanism for organisations to attract and retain funding. This is because M&E systems are viewed as a major donor requirement within the NPO sector. As such, the ability of organisations to demonstrate M&E capabilities allows organisations to retain current funding as well as justify calls for and proposals for funding.

5.2.3. The Experiences of Implementing Monitoring and Evaluation Systems within Non-Profit Organisations

The experiences which may facilitate or hinder the implementation of M&E systems were identified as follows:

Positive experiences

- It emerged from the research that positive experiences associated with M&E system implementation related to participants training, their M&E role, and the capacity of organisations for M&E. Participants who had M&E specific roles highlighted the freedom and innovation used to design M&E systems for organisations who had previously never had M&E roles or responsibilities.
- Participants also highlighted the use of the M&E system as a feedback tool for the monitoring and evaluation of programmes running in the organisation inferring that M&E may be utilised as an organisational learning tool.
- Participants showcased the use of various tools and software utilised to collect, manage, and analyse data to address the informational needs of the organisation and key stakeholders.
- Findings revealed participants expressing the participatory nature of M&E which sees M&E system implementation as a task that requires human capacity to ensure understanding amongst all whom may be involved in implementation as well as those who will be the recipients of the information collected and generated from the system. This, however, is contingent on the capacity of trained staff to lead M&E within the organisation and the support dedicated to ensuring capacity building amongst employees who implement the system and those who need to use the system for information.

Negative experiences

- The negative experiences associated with M&E system implementation were highlighted by participants as those issues relating to M&E donor expectations, the management and collection of data of the M&E system and the lack of existing M&E guides for the NPO sector.
- The lack of M&E guidelines within the sector were highlighted by several participants who were tasked with heading the M&E activities and processes within their organisations without prior training or experience in efforts to address and demonstrate M&E capability to fulfil donor requirements and attract funding.
- Research findings also highlighted that although NPOs may declare the presence of M&E within the organisation, it is an activity done for external validation of donors and has no bearing on the actual activities of the organisation.
- Lastly it emerged that participants experience difficulty in the collection and management of data of the M&E system which is a vital component of the system. The ability of the M&E system to function effectively demands a system with all parts functioning to act as one. If the

system is unable to collect and manage information in a timely and reliable manner, it may be unable to inform decision making and serve as a learning tool for the organisation.

5.2.4. The Challenges of Monitoring and Evaluation System Implementation within the Non-Profit Organisation Sector

The challenges faced by participants in their implementation of M&E systems within their NPOs were identified as the following:

System challenges

- It emerged that participants experienced various challenges related to the components of the M&E system such as collecting, managing, analysing and reporting information within the NPO. As the system relies on various parts connected to one another in order to serve the systems central purpose whatever it may be for the NPO, these challenges impede the system's ability to provide information that may be utilised within the NPO to serve different purposes. Such challenges may largely be as a result of planning and skill, human and resource capacity challenges of the NPO to host M&E systems.

Human Resource capacity

- The shortage of human and skill capacity was highlighted as a challenge for many participants in the implementation of M&E systems. Participants expressed the difficulty in undertaking M&E activities and fulfilling various M&E requirements whilst understaffed and under skilled. As a result, issues such as time constraints as well as the practicality of producing quality M&E work were exacerbated.

Financial constraints

- The issue of financial constraints also emerged as a factor which challenged the implementation of M&E activities and processes within the organisations. Participants felt that budget allocations for M&E were often minimal or restricted and thus affected the implementation process.
- Failure to plan and budget for M&E may result in the system suffering and influencing the ways in which data is collected, analysed and reported. Therefore, the availability or lack of financial support may greatly influence the success or failure of M&E systems.

5.2.5. The Benefits of having Monitoring and Evaluation Systems in Place in the Non-Profit Organisation Sector

The benefits of implementation of M&E systems were influenced by the internal and external purposes the M&E system were designed to serve. The following benefits emerged:

Programme support and implementation

- M&E was seen as a beneficial tool for NPOs that allowed for participants the ability to support and enhance the implementation of programmes. Participants highlighted the use of information collected from the system to support and inform decision making of programmes implemented by the NPO. As such, information collected from the system acted as a feedback loop for programmes resulting in informed decision-making enhancing participants ability to deliver services

Accountability

- Accountability was highlighted as one of the major benefits of M&E system implementation. This allowed participants to showcase their work and impact through an accountability framework that allowed participants to have ownership of the services delivered.

Funding opportunities

- It was also revealed that M&E provided various financial opportunities for NPOs to pursue. Evidence of M&E systems within NPOs was highlighted by participants to be an attractive feature to retain and secure funding as M&E is a major donor requirement. M&E reports can be utilised in funding requests and calls which allows for NPOs to demonstrate accountability and transparency within the organisation and the impact of services delivered by NPOs.

5.3. Recommendations

The following recommendations are provided based on the research findings. These recommendations are proposed for NPO management, M&E employees and donors.

5.3.1. Recommendations for NPO Management

- For the M&E system to be effective, management needs to prioritise M&E processes and activities within the organisation. This requires an M&E system that is accessible to all key stakeholders and understood by all key stakeholders.

- For an M&E system to function effectively, it needs to be designed according to the needs of the organisation and the informational needs of the key stakeholders. This requires all parties that are relevant to the programme to have an understanding of the M&E system and the many or singular purposes it may serve in the organisation. This can be done by engaging all stakeholders in the planning and implementation of the M&E system that can then be formulised into a tangible document accessible to the key stakeholders.
- Management needs to prioritise planning for the funding of M&E activities and include it in the organisational budget. Through this, organisations can negotiate donor funding for M&E by providing a budget for M&E and discuss with donors the importance of funding M&E practices within organisations.

5.3.2. Recommendations for M&E Employees

- M&E employees should employ the use of simplified language to encourage participation and understanding of M&E amongst organisational employees, beneficiaries and donors who are the recipients of information collection from M&E systems.
- Planning for the M&E system should occur alongside the programme designing and before the implementation stage. This allows for M&E staff to be prepared for the activities and processes needed for the programme's implementation such as preparation of resources, including personnel and time for M&E activities within the programme's lifespan.
- Priority should be made to address internal reporting to foster a learning environment that facilitates decision making within organisations by M&E employees with the support and encouragement of NPO management.
- M&E employees should ensure that the system is not only effective in achieving programmes objectives but also that it is done in an efficient manner. This should be done by only monitoring and evaluating what is deemed necessary and sufficient for the programme management and accountability. By doing so, time and resources are maximised by working towards the collection, management and analysis of data that is relevant and useful as opposed to using resources on extra information that may then be more of a burden on the systems capabilities.

5.3.3. Recommendations for Donors

- It is recommended that donors need to be open to the M&E systems and activities already present within the organisation and allow for communication with NPOs on discussing the most appropriate M&E requirements suitable for the context of programmes.

5.3.4. Recommendations for Future Research

- It is recommended that future researchers explore the technical details of M&E system implementation within organisations. This will allow for further insight into how organisations use M&E evidence for decision-making and strategic adjustments which was not explored in the current study.

5.4. Conclusion

Chapter five provided the conclusions of the research questions and objectives posed by the research study. These conclusions were formed on the major findings of the study which have been discussed in chapter four focussing on the perceptions, purposes, experiences and benefits of M&E systems within NPOs in the Western Cape. The experiences of M&E system implementation discussed by participants who had varying levels of experiences, training and roles within the organisations demonstrates the complex nature of implementation within NPOs as M&E becomes a common practice and expectation amongst donors and NPOs. Efforts to undertake research on this area of the NPO sector can lead to the emergence of useful information and resources that can encourage discussion around improvements on M&E practices within the sector as well as create discourse between NPOs and donors that allow for the opportunity to create a relationship of support, the provision of resources and services that encourages and facilitates the development of M&E capacity and capability within organisations and the NPO sector as a whole.

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Appendix A – Consent Form

University of Cape Town
Department of Social Development
5th Floor, Leslie Social Science Building
University Avenue
Upper Campus
Rondebosch 7701
Tel: 021 650 3483/93

Research Title:

An Exploratory Study on the Monitoring and Evaluation Systems of NPOs in the Western Cape.

My name is Leila Thesen. I am a student registered at the University of Cape Town studying towards my Master's in Social Policy and Management.

I am conducting a research study that forms part of my Master's degree. The focus of my research is on the implementation of monitoring and evaluation systems within the NPO sector. My research aims to explore and gain and understanding of implementing M&E systems within the NPO sector. This will be done by exploring the perceptions of M&E practices, experiences of implementing M&E systems within a NPO context, as well as the benefits and challenges of implementing M&E. In doing so, the study hopes to shed light and contribute to a holistic view of M&E within the NPO sector.

To participate in this study, participants need be over 18 years old; employed in the organisation for at least a year prior to this study; and oversee the Monitoring and Evaluation of the Non-Profit Organisation. Your participation in the study will involve in-depth interviews that will be guided by a semi-structured interview schedule (attached in the email) to facilitate the discussion on your experiences, perceptions and attitudes on Monitoring and Evaluation system implementation within Non-Profits.

To ensure compliance with national and UCT Covid-19 protocols, the interviews will be conducted remotely/virtually using the online platforms of Zoom, Microsoft Teams and WhatsApp. In the absence of Wi-Fi, telephonic interviews will be used in which the researcher will be responsible for the cost of airtime. Virtual interviews are the preferred method of data collection. However, if face-to-face interviews are needed, the interviews will be conducted in line with stringent Covid-

19 safety measures of social distancing; mandatory masks; and the use of a screening form and thermometer before the interview can take place.

Participation in the study is entirely voluntary. You can withdraw from the research study at any time without consequence. There will be no incentives or financial gain from participation in the study. To withdraw from the study, you will need to notify the researcher. No reason for withdrawal is needed. However, notification of withdrawal allows the researcher to take the necessary steps to remove any of the interview data collected. Withdrawal can be done through email. The interviews will be recorded for ease of access to the data collected. Participants can choose to switch off their camera to protect their privacy. To ensure your confidentiality, the recordings of interviews will only be accessible to the researcher and the supervisor and will be password protected on a google file on Google Drive. The recordings will be transcribed, and you will be assigned pseudonyms which will only be knowledgeable to the researcher. All data collected will be filled in a password-protected laptop and uploaded to a Google Drive File that is password protected and will only be accessible to the researcher.

The study will ensure that all personal details are kept confidential and that no identifying details of the individual or the organisation will be disclosed in the final research report. The findings of the research study may also be used for additional academic purposes, including academic literature such as books, journal articles or used as part of academic research reports in a review of relevant literature.

If you have any further questions or would like to know more, please contact me at THSLEI001@myuct.ac.za or my supervisor Lauren-Jayne Van Niekerk lauren.vanniekerk@uct.ac.za. We will answer any queries you may have regarding the research study.

Having read and understood the above. I understand that:

- Participation in the study is entirely voluntary, and I can withdraw at any moment with no repercussions.
- I may refuse to respond to questions that I do not want to answer.
- There are no financial benefits or drawbacks to taking part in the study.
- My identity will be kept private and any identifying information will be removed from the interview transcriptions.

- The researcher will record the interview for the purpose of documenting my response and not for any other purpose.
- The researcher will store a copy of the interview transcript with no identifying information to be utilised in the future.
- I understand the study will utilise my responses in the research study and the research report and may be included in other academic publications.

I ________________________________, agree to the voluntary participate in the study.

Signature:

Date:

Appendix B: Participation Invitation Letter

University of Cape Town
Department of Social Development
5th Floor, Leslie Social Science Building
University Avenue
Upper Campus
Rondebosch 7701
Tel: 021 650 3483/93

Dear Invitee,

My name is Leila Thesen. I am a Master's student at the University of Cape Town in the Department of Social Development, specialising in Social Policy and Management. I am kindly requesting your participation in my Master's research study that I am conducting titled: *An Exploratory Study on the Monitoring and Evaluation Systems of Non-Profit Organisations in the Western Cape*. The study intends to gain a deeper understanding of M&E system implementation within the NPO sector. The research objectives for the study aims to explore the perceptions of monitoring and evaluation systems within Non-Profit Organisations; examine the positive and negative experiences of implementing monitoring and evaluation systems within Non-Profit Organisations; determine the benefits of having monitoring and evaluation systems in place in the Non-Profit Sector; and to understand the challenges of monitoring and evaluation system implementation within the non-profit sector. By raising awareness of the experiences and perceptions of monitoring and evaluation systems within the Non-profit sector, the study aims to provide valuable information to Non-Profit Organisations and donors. This can enhance the opportunity for support and the provision of resources and services to ensure monitoring and evaluation personnel are capable of and are enabled to implement monitoring and evaluation systems. These efforts can ensure that M&E systems are effective and yield the desired results—through a collaborative effort.

The study involves a semi-structured interview which will be conducted using online mediums such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, WhatsApp video or Facetime. In the absence of these online communication forms, I will use phone calls to conduct the interviews, with the cost of the call being my responsibility as the researcher. If none of those options is available, the use of face-to-face interviews may take place in line with Covid-19 safety protocols in place. Interviews conducted will last no longer than ±30 minutes.

Participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time. The researcher will ensure the confidentiality by assigning pseudonyms to each participant so that any information recorded cannot be traced to the participant and the organisation. I will store the interview data in electronic files that will be password protected and will only be accessible to the researcher. The findings of the research will be written to ensure that participants and organisations will not be identifiable.

Attached to this email is the consent. The consent form aims to ensure all information pertaining to the study is provided before participation. If you are pleased with the information provided and wish to take part, the consent form will need to be signed and emailed to me at THSLEIO@myuct.ac.za.

Your participation in the research will be of great importance to assist in broadening the research on monitoring and evaluation within the non-profit sector and identifying challenges and solutions.

If you have any further questions, please email me at THSLEI001@myuct.ac.za or my supervisor Lauren van Niekerk lauren.vanniekerk@uct.ac.za.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Leila Thesen

Master's student

University of Cape Town (Department of Social Development)

Appendix C – Interview Schedule

Semi-structured Interview Schedule

Demographics:

1. What is your educational background?
2. What is the highest academic qualification you have attained?
3. How long have you been working for the organisation?
4. What is your current position in this organisation?
5. In what ways are you involved in the M&E of the organisation?

   5.1. How long have you been involved in these activities?

   5.2 Have you received any training on M&E systems and implementation? If so, what training did you receive?

Monitoring and Evaluation Perceptions:

1. With monitoring and evaluation having many definitions, how would you define monitoring and evaluation?
2. What is the purpose of monitoring and evaluation within the NPO sector?
3. How is the information collected from monitoring and evaluation used to fulfil its purpose?

Monitoring and Evaluation Experiences:

1. Did you have experience within the field of monitoring and evaluation before your M&E role within your organisation?

   Probe: If so, could you describe the roles and responsibilities you have undertaken within the M&E field?
2. Does your organisation provide you with additional training and support for M&E?
3. What has been your overall experience of implementing monitoring and evaluation systems within your organisation?

   Probe: explore positive and negative experiences
4. What internal organisational factors influence monitoring and evaluation within your organisation?

   Probe: organisational structure, culture, decision-making or impact
5. What are some of the external environmental factors that influence monitoring and evaluation within your NPO?

Probe: stakeholders' accountability demands; competition; potential funders; and regulatory environment?

Subcategory: Monitoring and Evaluation System:

1. How would you define what an M&E system is?
2. How is the M&E system or activities in your organisation designed and implemented?
3. Does the organisation have written M&E policies and procedures that are currently in place?
4. What tools or software does the organisation use in its M&E activities?
5. Do you feel its important for your organisation to have such tools and software in place?
6. Could you describe the process of M&E being implemented?
   Probe: Could you give some examples of how M&E is incorporated in the organisation?
7. How many M&E staff does the organisation have? If there are more than one, what are their roles and responsibilities?
8. Does the organisation have the institutional capacity to carry out M&E
9. How is information collected from the M&E system used?

Challenges / Benefits of M&E:

1. Does M&E shape the organisations activities?
   Probe: in what ways?
2. What are the donor expectations of the M&E system?
3. Are the donor expectations for M&E within the organisation reasonable and feasible in terms of organisational capacity?
   Probe: If not, please explain further.
4. Is the monitoring and evaluation system effective in fulfilling its particular purpose? How so?
5. Is the M&E system supported by the management and board of directors?
   Probe: In what ways do they show their support?
6. What challenges have you encountered in your role as facilitating monitoring and evaluation within your organisation?
   Probe: human, skill or financial capacity?
   Probe: Have you been able to overcome them? How so?
7. Does the organisation have a budget for M&E?
   Probe: If so, could you discuss how M&E practices are funded within the organisation?

8. In what ways has the monitoring and evaluation system served the interests of the organisation and its donors?
9. Does the M&E system influence the performance of programmes the organisation runs? Probe: in what ways?
10. What are the main benefits of having M&E systems in place in your organisation?

Interviewee Debrief:

To conclude, is there anything else that you would like to share with us about your experience within the field of monitoring and evaluation in the non-profit sector? Do you have any questions for me, or would you like clarification about anything that we have discussed?

Thank you again for your time and willingness to participate in this interview. Your information will be combined with others who have participated in similar interviews and analysed to create a broad picture of monitoring and evaluation systems and the experiences, perceptions and understanding of those who are tasked with implementing such systems. Just to reiterate, your name and the name of the organisation will be kept confidential and will not be linked to any information published in the study. Furthermore, if you wish to withdraw from the study at any time, you can do so. Please do feel free to contact me or my supervisor, Lauren, should you have any further questions about the study.