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MONITORING SYSTEMS IN AFRICA

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Section 2

INSTITUTIONALISING MONITORING SYSTEMS

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Chapter 5: Institutionalising Monitoring Systems: Introducing Results-Based Monitoring to Organisational Systems

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It has been observed that social development efforts were frustrated by the recent global pandemic in the past three years. The pandemic had a regressive effect both on human and economic conditions globally. It crowded out other initiatives by redirecting public and private resourcing towards managing the effects of COVID-19 (Sheth, Lorig, Stewart, Parodi and Ritter 2021). As a result, with the growing demand for social innovation and solutions that work, the development community has become less tolerant of programmes and investments that struggle to show meaningful impact (Mashamaite 2014; Breakfast, Nomarwayi, and Dodd 2021). These concerns have rekindled interest in good programme management and, more importantly, in robust monitoring systems that can assess how well development projects and social programmes meet their intended objectives over time.

In practice, it is conventionally understood that theories of change lead M&E frameworks, which provide direction to monitoring systems. Contrary to this norm, monitoring is typically a management practice that is part of a system that is often entrenched in institutional patterns, and not necessarily aligned with the learning and evaluation system of an organisation. Although the development of theories of change is arguably easier once management and stakeholder commitment to participate in the process is achieved, embedding a results-based monitoring system within an organisation with existing norms and standards requires significant cultural and behavioural shifts. It involves significant creative and collaborative pushes that may conflict with existing norms, and even experience 'push-back'.

This chapter explores and discusses disparities between organisational norms and behavioural requirements for results-based monitoring systems and their effects on management tensions as organisations attempt to implement and institutionalise

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results-based monitoring systems. It discusses lessons from experts and practitioners in South Africa who implemented results-based monitoring systems in different types of organisations.

The chapter first explains monitoring in the context of a programme or organisation to ensure a grounded understanding of results-based monitoring systems. The chapter then explains the concept of systems in the context of an organisation. Finally, to ground the arguments made on lessons from practice, different theoretical perspectives of change in the context of an organisation are explained.

Monitoring in the Context of a Programme or Organisation

Despite the reality that M&E practice can differ depending on the underlying programme or policy context, which can fundamentally alter the content, process, and monitoring activities, practitioners and scholars have some common ground regarding the 'occasionally blurred line' that differentiates Monitoring from Evaluation. Gosling and Edwards offer a helpful description of monitoring as "...a systematic and continuous collection and analysis of information about the progress of a piece of work overtime" (2003:12).

Therefore, monitoring is an intent to keep all stakeholders well-informed and positioned to make real-time decisions throughout the implementation of an intervention. It differs from evaluation in several ways; i) it is traditionally carried out by internal rather than external staff and serves as a management tool, ii) it is performed routinely (ongoing) rather than periodically (at specific intervals), and iii) although not the case in contemporary practice, monitoring tends to focus more on early-stage and process results such as activities and outputs, as opposed to outcomes and impact. However, in response to the call for measuring meaningful change, the contemporary practice of monitoring tends to prioritise tracking outcome indicators (Nxumalo 2016). Due to these three monitoring characteristics, it is usually designed as a system with processes, rules, infrastructure, and people (Simister 2017).

In support of the central argument made in this chapter, Simister (2017) emphasises the need to embed programme monitoring firmly within programme and organisational management norms by clarifying the seven types of monitoring, each monitoring specific aspects of organisational operations. The seven types of monitoring include:

1. **Process and performance monitoring** monitors the inputs, activities, and outputs of the programme or policy. It is intended to ensure that process plans are carried out as stated and to track deviation from plans.
2. **Outcomes or impact monitoring** tracks changes brought about by the programme over time. It monitors progress based on pre-stated outcomes towards the programme objectives.

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3. **Beneficiary monitoring or beneficiary contact monitoring** tracks beneficiary sentiments throughout the programme. It is intended to manage motivation to participate and manage attrition risk and can include routine feedback mechanisms and routine surveys.
4. **Situation monitoring.** In results-based systems, the programmes make explicit assumptions about the programme context and situation. The programme might also state environmental risks to the underlying intervention and might monitor ongoing changes in a dynamic context or programme environment based on predefined indicators to manage these risks and assumptions.
5. **Financial Monitoring.** Although this is often managed separately from the programme monitoring system, tracking expenditure and resource levels against progress can be critical in resource-sensitive or pilot programmes earmarked for large scaling.
6. **Administrative or logistics monitoring.** Simister describes this as tracking the maintenance of premises, transport, personnel, stock-keeping, and other forms of administration.
7. **Compliance monitoring.** In many social or environmental initiatives, strict compliance is crucial as it can determine the immediate failure of the initiative. In such programmes, tracking compliance is based on a predetermined set of indicators.

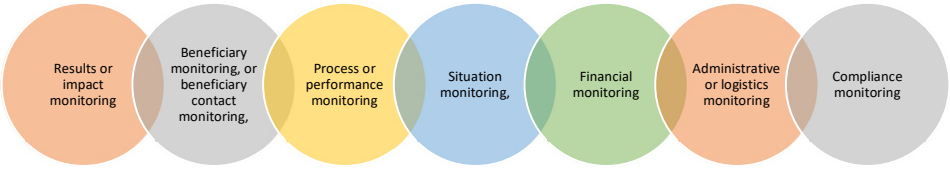

Figure 5.1: Simister, The Seven Forms of Monitoring, 2017

Systems in the Context of an Organisation

In the complex fourth industrial revolution era, the word "system" is used interchangeably to refer to a digital platform that can be seen. Otherwise phrased, the term is used to describe the conceptual interconnectivity of processes, people, infrastructure, and rules within an organisation. In this chapter, the interest and focus are on the conceptual meaning of a "system". Therefore, "system" refers to a set of 'things' working together as parts of a mechanism, or an interconnecting network, resulting in a complex whole. Alternatively, a system can refer to a set of principles or procedures according to which something is done; an organised scheme or method (Oxford Dictionary).

McNamara (2017) explains a system aligned to the focus of this chapter. He describes a system as simply an organised collection of parts (or subsystems) that are highly integrated to accomplish an overarching goal. An organisation might consist of a

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clear organisational goal that other functions of the organisation (subsystems) collaboratively work towards achieving. These may include administrative and management functions, products and services, and human resource functions. Finally, interactions between these functions determine the culture and behavioural norms of the organisation's system. The key characteristic is the interdependency or the interrelationships between organisational functions. The interactions (based on the known set of rules) between these functions determine the organisation's outputs towards its goals. Similarly, in the context of M&E, the 'monitoring system' typically consists of a stated logic of change (results of change), a clear set of programme results, the indicator framework, data collection tools, the sources of data or information, the users and managers of the information, and the infrastructure. These are intended to interact with each other to ensure continuous learning, accountability, and improved performance.

In this chapter, both the monitoring system and the organisational system should be considered as open systems that must interact with each other and the environment. They continually exchange feedback between each other and their various parts to ensure that they remain closely aligned and focused on achieving the goals of the organisation. The monitoring system needs to interact with broader management processes. These can include knowledge management (KM), financial management, human resources, data storage, marketing, fundraising, or quality assurance. For example, individuals rolling out a new monitoring system may need to rely on KM and data storage processes to ensure that the system operates appropriately (Feruglio and Nisbett 2018). Alternatively, and more critically, monitoring information may need to inform management decisions, thereby adding a step to decision-making processes.

Now, suppose the parts of either the system or the systems' activities are altered or forced to deviate from the norm; as a reaction to the change, the system should be expected to make necessary adjustments to achieve the goals for which it was designed.

This chapter argues that altering any of the rules, parts, and system resourcing will inevitably also either weaken or strengthen the system's functioning, at least in the short to medium term (Teece 2018), thereby affecting the nature and quality of the regular system outputs. In practical terms, introducing results-based monitoring processes (the monitoring system) into an existing organisational or programme context with its norms and culture can alter ongoing activities and outputs in the short to medium term. Furthermore, unless the process is managed well, the altering effect can, in turn, result in 'push back' or resistance from management and staff. This phenomenon will be discussed later in the chapter.

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Change in the Context of Organisations

M&E practitioners and scholars have provided examples and cases that eloquently describe processes and common agreements about critical milestones for developing results-based monitoring systems, including those described by Kusek and Rist (2001), Clements (2005), Mackay (2006), Kusek (2010), as well as Mapitsa and Chirau (2019). However, there is little literature and few theories detailing and modelling organisational change tensions brought about by the introduction of results-based monitoring systems. Although there is a significant history of literature and a plethora of theories that unpack and model general organisational change, the M&E community has not yet sufficiently applied or built from these theories to foster understanding regarding tensions that arise from the implementation of results-based monitoring.

To respond to this 'gap' and ground the chapter's central argument, this section explains key organisational change concepts that help explain tensions experienced during the implementation of result-based monitoring systems.

In this section, organisational change refers to the transformation of an organisation between two points in time (Barnett and Carroll 1995). The trigger for such transformation is usually intentional and explicit, such as the introduction of new technology, new production methodology, and new products, services, or interventions. Or, more important to the topic of this chapter, an introduction of a results-based monitoring system. Throughout the section, change is to be considered in two dimensions; the first dimension is the content of change, which is the consideration of the 'what' of change, i.e., what elements of the organisation (the elements of structure or radical shifts in a single element of structure) alter during the transformation. The second element of change studies the processes of change. These can be the speed of change, the sequence of change activities, decision-making, communication, and the resistance encountered. It is, therefore, the 'how' of change.

The Perspective of Consequence of Change Theory

One of the principal reasons for the consideration of organisational change theory is the consequence of organisational change. This consideration of organisational change theory serves as a framework for the understanding of successes and failures resulting from the implementation of results-based monitoring systems in an existing organisational or programme context. Understanding this aspect of organisational change theory is particularly critical due to results-based monitoring systems being designed to drive 'core structural change' within any organisational or programme context. Hamman and Freeman (1984) define core structural changes as changes in organisational mission, authority structure, technology, and marketing structure. It should be considered that in practice, any design and development of a results-

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based monitoring system starts with review and refinement of an organisation or programme's results, which are typically defined in the form of a theory of change. Result-based monitoring systems often include a retrofitted theory of change with 'smartly' articulated impact and outcome statements in the form of a results chain (McConnell 2019).

This theory-based approach to refining and re-stating the organisation's intended results inevitably alters its mission. One of the key functions and intentions of a results-based monitoring system is to promote and support a data-driven accountability culture. By intention, such a culture mainstreams M&E evidence to drive accountability, management, and strategic decision-making. In other words, a monitoring system aims to change how the organisational authority structures make decisions towards a culture of evidence-based decision making. By defining what should count (the organisation's outcomes) and outlining a clear measurement framework and plan, a results-based monitoring system organically proposes a way in which to change ideal organisation operation. Some monitoring systems might be explicit about intervals of staff reflections, methodology for managing and sharing knowledge, and may define a matching theory of implementation that accommodates results-based monitoring activities (Montague 2019; Jankvist, Gregersen, and Lauridsen 2021; DuBow and Litzler 2019). To substantiate this point, a flagship education programme for the South African Department of Basic Education adopted a result-based monitoring system in 2018 that refined its rhythms for management and accountability engagements, the way measurements are conducted, and the re-alignment of its performance review process. The programme also adjusted its implementation approach to accommodate and integrate real-time data collection during teacher training sessions to feed into the ongoing monitoring cycle, thereby altering the organisational implementation process, and associated reporting and information systems.

One of the benefits and key features of any monitoring system is defining and facilitating the celebration of organisational achievements as defined in the results framework. In fact, with the growth and popularity of results-based management and M&E broadly, the capacity to demonstrate organisational effectiveness and initiative impact through M&E evidence has become a critical requisite for programme or organisational funding. This is especially true for organisations with an overarching M&E system that is a central part of the administrative system, such as development corporations and governments. This said, the use of monitoring evidence for marketing purposes has become common in such organisations.

Therefore, we can sufficiently and safely assert that a results-based monitoring system is designed to change the organisational mission, authority structure, technology, and marketing structure. Consequently, we should align with Hennan and Freeman's theory that "Core Structural Change is precarious and leads to an elevated probability of organisational failure and death" (Hean and Freeman 1984:156)

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Hennan and Freeman (1984) argue that there is a positive relationship between core structural changes and the probability of organisational failure. However, the theory makes provision that some organisations can manage such changes well, and in these cases, the significant positive performance can be realised. Perhaps this theory can help explain common observations regarding the introduction of results-based monitoring systems:

- The risk of change failure and organisational death can explain the uneasiness among organisational and programme leadership to fully embrace a result-based monitoring system, which often results in push-back or part-implementation of such a system.
- Reluctance to embed a results-based monitoring system due to the probability of organisational failure can be the reason for the absence of appropriate incentives for M&E and low rates of meaningful learning.

These observations can account for diminishing investments to maintain appropriate resource levels for a functional monitoring system which, in turn, leads to system ineffectiveness over time.

Hage (1999) argues that changes in the environment trigger change choices like organisational form and the movement toward (or away from) an organic form. An organic organisation is defined as an organisational structure where all the employees are placed at equal levels. In this type of flat structure, the interactions and communication are horizontal by nature (Aiken and Hage 1971). Hage (1999) identifies four theories as perspectives for understanding organisational change. These perspectives are introduced below and are used as reference points for describing changes dictated by the introduction of results-based monitoring systems.

The Perspective of Structural Contingency Theory

The original assertion of the structural contingency theory (Burns and Stalker 1961) is that a stable demand leads to a mechanical organisation. In contrast, a changing demand creates the need for an organic organisation, emphasising innovation and flexibility. According to Hage (1999), this assertion was later adjusted by Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) when they argued that an organic form of an organisation is a result of applying new knowledge from the environment and is not necessarily triggered by changes in demand. A more apparent claim of this perspective is that applied knowledge and awareness of shifts in the environment (whether economic or political) should determine needed changes in the organisation that will help match the environment, i.e., reaction to the knowledge of environmental changes determines organisational changes.

The theory explains two observations when applied to our results-based monitoring systems context. The first is that results-based management gained popularity among development corporations, civil society organisations, non-profit organisations,

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and governments (Berezovsky, 2017). It increasingly became a standard framework for good management of social initiatives. Due to this view, the donor community made it a condition for fund disbursement, thereby proliferating the practice of RBM in the sector. As a result, a significant shift in the development environment was recognised that warranted a shift at the organisation level (Swiss 2005; Pfeffer and Sutton 2006; Hulme 2007; Kusek 2010; Vähämäki, Schmidt and Molander 2011). In line with Structural Contingency Theory, organisations aware of this shift towards results-based management increased their demand and searched for models that can best respond to this shift in the sector.

The second observation focuses on the magnitude of knowledge and appreciation of its value, as well as application levels. Hage & Powers (1992) argue that more and more knowledge of changes in economic and political sectors determines emphasis on choice and commitment to organisational form. Hage et al. (1993) provide empirical evidence of this relationship. This view provides an important glimpse into the 'maturity spectrum' of adopting results-based monitoring systems between organisations that have introduced them. According to this theory, organisations with superior knowledge of the nature of demand for results-based management and evidence-based decision-making tend to invest in more deepened institutionalisation of results-based monitoring systems than organisations with minimal understanding of the nature of demand from the sector. This emphasises and gives credence to recent and continued investments in RBM and M&E capacity development, especially in the African continent, as a panacea for the poor institutionalisation of results-based monitoring systems. In other words, this view justifies efforts to professionalise M&E as a gateway for improving and deepening evidence use in Africa. In the last two decades, organisations like the Centres for Learning on Evaluation and Results (CLEAR), the Independent Evaluation Group, the African Capacity Building Foundation, Twende Mbele, African Evidence Network, the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association, African Evaluation Association, and many others have identified and mainstreamed capacity development as a key strategy to improve evidence-based decision-making in the development sectors of the continent.

The Perspective of Political Theory

An implicit assumption of structural contingency theory (SCT) is that managers (as individual staff) will also adjust to meet environmental demands in ways that are appropriate for them. More specifically, SCT relies on the assumption that vital organisational functions or departments that handle critical contingencies of the organisation or programme – referred to by Pfeffer (1981) as "dominant coalitions" – will embrace change and act in ways that accommodate the change. Pfeffer (1981) disagrees with this assumption for two main reasons: Firstly, regardless of what occurs initially (changes in the entire organisation or changes in the 'dominant coalition'),

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any shift in the dominant coalition is tantamount to a shift in organisational strategy either for or against the intended organisational change. The dominant coalition can invoke their prerogative to claim potential risk to a core strategy and label the change as high risk, especially when change feels uncomfortable. Following this argument, the true power to organisational change remains mainly with the dominant coalition. For example, in a programme that intends to change teaching pedagogies in schools, the workstream responsible for teacher training is core to such a programme and can therefore be referred to as the dominant coalition. A new theory of change for such a programme might suggest a change in how teacher training is implemented and measured. Now, according to Pfeffer (1981), whether such a change will be successful or sustained by the programme depends directly on whether the teacher training workstream (dominant coalition) accepts it or not. This argument provides an interesting perspective for why many organisations that attempt to implement monitoring systems are met with resistance and hardly see success. Alternatively, in fortunate situations, they show high levels of success.

In practice, it is conventional for drivers of M&E plans and systems (whether internal as officers or external as consultants) to identify 'implementation champions' thoughtfully selected from internal management to act as supporters and leads for change. These may be individuals or groups who have fully embraced the idea of a functional results-based monitoring system. Such champions might not represent the dominant coalition of the organisations as described above. In this case, any proposed activity of the results-based monitoring system that purports to effect fundamental change to the ways of working of the dominant coalition has a high probability to be met with resistance, especially when the change is deemed somewhat uncomfortable. Theory suggests that in this case, the dominant coalition will have the necessary leverage to block the change towards results-based management on behalf of the rest of the organisation. Conversely, where the implementation champion is successfully recruited among influential members of the dominant coalition, fundamental changes to the coalition's ways of working can be received with positive support and thus lead to successful institutionalisation of the results-based monitoring system.

For the second reason, Pfeffer (1974) and Salancik (1978) offer a reminder that the implementation of results-based monitoring systems requires significant resource investment. A compelling point is made which states that while the dominant coalition may enjoy a level of influence and power, they are also beholden to those who control the organisational 'treasure chests'. Real influence rests with those who control organisational resources. Therefore, we are compelled to apply a Resource Dependency lens, which suggests that effective 'championship' for the successful embedding of a results-based monitoring system is best placed with those who control resources. This is typical of development corporations' and governments' procedural standards. A part of the consideration for new or continued funding of

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programmes depends on the programme management's ability to demonstrate evidence or a clear intention to implement a results-based monitoring system. As an example, an internal review by Data Innovators (Pty) Ltd of sixteen of its monitoring and evaluation clients in 2020, reflected the fact that the most successful clients (those who showed significant levels of M&E institutionalisation) are organisations in which M&E services are procured and championed by the underlying programme funders (Data Innovators 2020).

The Perspective of Institutional Theory

According to Hage (1999), institutional theory can help unpack how change diffuses within countries and even across them. It can also provide alternative explanations for countries not responding to sectoral or market pressures. Scott (2008) points out that institutions have the responsibility to provide rules and define ways and norms to operate by either discouraging, constraining, or encouraging given behavioural patterns. The central idea is that any organisation operating within the jurisdictions of a defined society will be affected and influenced by society's rules, norms, and behaviour. More importantly, any significant shift in society's rules, norms, and behaviour will, by diffusion, influence the form such an organisation will adopt (Powell and DiMaggio 1991).

Scott (2008) defines the three pillars on which societal norms are constructed, which will guide our interpretation of this perspective in this chapter. The first is the regulative pillar, formal and legally codified into explicit rules used to set clear parameters.

In South Africa, the advent and popularity of M&E with the establishment of the Department of Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation was observed in 2010. Subsequently, the launch of the National Evaluation Policy Framework led to the formalisation of M&E practice and what is now formally known as the Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation system (Mouton 2010; Abrahams 2015). The formalisation of M&E in the government's national and provincial departments further led to a wide shift in non-governmental organisations, particularly those which provide public services, and private companies who are service providers to the government (Bornstein 2006; Abrahams 2015; Ngwabi, Mpyana and Mapatwana 2020). This is the approach that the regulative environment in the country uses to formalise results-based monitoring in its organisations.

The second pillar - the normative one - is defined by Scott (2008) as non-codified attitudes present in societies that can serve as normative expectations and attitudes that are gradually internalised by individuals, and eventually become accepted as the norms to which everybody is encouraged to conform. To this point, Powell and DiMaggio (1991) offer a practical explanation by stressing the importance of professional associations, foundations, and socialisation agents as drivers of change

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in organisational forms. This underscores the role of Voluntary Organisations for Professional Evaluations (VOPEs), such as the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association (SAMEA) and the African Evaluation Association (AfrEA), of shapers of 'results-based behaviour' among their individual and institutional members across the continent. Since their establishment, the two associations have influenced M&E practice (Goldman, Engela, Akhalwaya, Gasa, Mohamed and Phillips 2012; Basheka and Byamugisha 2015; Abrahams 2015; Cloete 2016; Kimaro and Fourie 2017). Following Powell and DiMaggio (1991) and Scott (2008), we would not be reaching too far to postulate that they also influenced the institutionalisation of results-based monitoring systems in many organisations.

Finally, Scott (2008) also asserts that while the foundational idea of the regulative pillar is 'conformity' to the rules and laws, the normative pillar recounts what is considered appropriate. Over time, the two are bound to influence individuals and groups at the cognitive level. Said differently, both rules and societal 'pressures' will eventually shape the way in which individuals think and solve problems. Arguably, this concept of cognitive influence is precisely the hope of organisational 'champions' of results-based monitoring systems. The anticipated level of institutionalisation of results-based monitoring will strengthen a culture of evidence-based decision-making.

However, contributing to our more profound understanding of organisational change from the perspective of institutional theory, Scott (2008) also provides a warning that depending on the nature and context of the pressure, responses to institutional pressures and expectations may range from passive conformity to active resistance. Perhaps Scott's idea of "the nature and context of pressures" may help us consider and understand our experiences of individual or group vested interests and fears that prevent them from embracing result-based monitoring systems.

The Study

Methodology

Purposive, convenient recruitment of M&E practitioners and programme managers who have been involved in building or strengthening an organisational monitoring system was used to identify participants for this study. The practitioners are conveniently picked from a list of M&E consultants and Data Innovators (Pty) Ltd clients. The practitioners ranged in experience from six to 21 years. The analysis is based on interview data from the 12 practitioners conducted between 09 January and 09 February 2022.

These practitioners represented experiences of results-based monitoring systems in a range of sectors, including Education and Skills Development, Health Sciences, Public Health, Governance, and Social Justice. The practitioners were interviewed

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separately and consecutively to allow a cumulative understanding of the topic. This way, the researcher could adjust the interview guide or test emerging themes for subsequent interviews based on an analysis of previous ones. The interviews were unstructured, with a similar set of questions asked of each practitioner but allowing the scope for expansion, probing, or opening new issues. The questions investigated the participants' experiences of building and institutionalising results-based monitoring systems and their notions of `success factors' for institutionalising such a system within existing organisational norms and culture. Moreover, the study explored participants' views and descriptions of the complexities of organisational change during the process. For example, a common question asked to all participants during the interviews was, "What do you think are the factors that determine successful institutionalisation or adoption of a results-based monitoring system?"

All interviews were audio-recorded and fully transcribed for analysis. Narrative analysis, a qualitative method of investigation, focused on the research topic and analysis of the data collected from case studies and interviews. In this technique, the researcher identifies key findings and analyses them against the underlying topic and theories (Hemman and Vervaeck 2019). This method relies on the researcher's understanding of the background, setting, social, and cultural context of the research subjects, including the relevant theoretical frameworks. The analytical process focused on the meaning of the participants' experiences and phenomena, and included themes, contrasts, and theoretical explanations.

Findings

The study identified several interrelated themes detailing factors that determine successes and failures of the institutionalisation of results-based monitoring systems: (i) a decentralised (well-cascaded) knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of the value of a results-based monitoring system, (ii) adequate technical and user capacity among key staff, (iii) the explicit alignment and coordination of the results-based monitoring system within the broader organisational system, and (iv) the appropriate positioning of the results-based monitoring system as a learning process, and not a punitive measure. The four key factors are discussed in this section. The study also found that the explanatory power of theoretical perspectives of organisational systems varies with the context of the underlying organisation. The discussion sub-section outlines this relationship.

Decentralised Knowledge, Understanding, and Appreciation of Results-Based Monitoring Systems

Many practitioners in the study found knowledge of M&E and awareness of the objectives of results-based monitoring to be key factors of success for meaningful implementation. Respondents who observed significant success in the

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implementation of a functional monitoring system attribute some success to staff awareness and working knowledge of M&E processes. These organisations were open to the sharing of information and were willing to accommodate M&E activities during daily operations, but there were also experiences of appropriate behaviour and support for meeting M&E requirements. Appreciation of the potential value of the results-based management to performance was said to have been an encouraging factor for management to embrace learning and the demand for performance data. It is essential to qualify this finding by clarifying that successful implementation was not observed among respondents who represented organisations where knowledge of RBM and M&E was concentrated among a few staff members. All respondents agreed that shared knowledge was more important than deepened knowledge concentrated amongst a 'handful' of team members. Two practitioners explained that when knowledge and appreciation are concentrated, the monitoring system tends to be owned and driven by a few individuals. It operates as a parallel system to the standard operating, accountability, and performance system. Even though the monitoring system can produce rich and valuable insights, these do not necessarily translate into learning or value for the organisation.

An example was provided by a respondent who represented the monitoring system of an organisation with a successful research and publication record. The respondent's monitoring system produces compelling monitoring insights that are disseminated widely amongst delivery partners. Although this monitoring system is highly productive, the uptake of the insights produced through programme monitoring has proven to be poor, resulting in little influence on decision-making. These practitioners attributed this observation to the fact that individuals who can make decisions for change in the organisation are not necessarily the same individuals who have an appreciation of the potential value of monitoring insights.

Respondents who experienced poor implementation of the results-based monitoring system also ascribed implementation failures to lack of awareness and understanding of M&E and the objectives of results-based management. As a result, in such organisations, staff who are meant to perform critical monitoring activities tend to show low participation when they do not understand the point of monitoring or its value to their work. Such staff members, therefore, default back to traditional routines.

To ensure shared understanding and appreciation of the value of the results-based monitoring system, almost all practitioners agree that a clear organisation-wide communication strategy before and during the change process is critical. One respondent emphasises the importance of treating the introduction and implementation of the results-based monitoring system as an organisational change project with a clear communication strategy for staff.

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Technical and User Capacity

Another challenge regarding the institutionalisation of results-based monitoring systems is the low or entirely missing technical and user capacity required to perform monitoring and data processing activities. Practitioners define technical capacity as the skills or ability to perform basic monitoring activities such as data capturing, data cleansing, data translation, and data summaries. On the other hand, user capacity refers to the ability to interpret summarised information and monitoring reports and to facilitate reflections amongst decision-makers based on insights from monitoring reports. Although for some monitoring systems, the collation and processing of monitoring data can be entirely outsourced to an external service provider, it remains necessary for the users to possess the skills to interpret, reflect, and make decisions based on monitoring insights. Respondents admit that sophisticated monitoring systems include functional Information Communication Technology (ICT) or a digital platform used to automate most data collation and processing activities, thereby reducing turnaround time and decreasing the cost of monitoring. However, although such a system inherently reduces the technical capacity needed for manual processing, it requires investment in a technical capacity to use the digital platform.

Respondents attribute failure to sustain the functioning and use of the monitoring system to low technical capacity. To remedy or avoid this capacity 'pitfall,' practitioners suggest several contextually dependent solutions:

- Organisations with existing research capacity in their human resources can invest in basic M&E training to ensure in-house technical capacity.
- Organisations with no existing research or transferable analytical skills are advised to invest in the recruitment of M&E specialists to manage the technical and coordination functions of the monitoring process. In the latter scenario, the investment in recruitment can be augmented and offset by investment in a digital platform. In response to the scarcity of M&E capacity, contemporary monitoring practice has also encouraged outsourced and full-time secondment of practitioners from specialist M&E consulting companies to organisations with low technical capacity.
- For all contexts, respondents emphasised organisation-wide user training as utilisation as being a key component of the monitoring process. The practitioners who participated in the study stressed the requirement of critical decision-makers and facilitators thereof being sufficiently prepared for the use of monitoring outputs. Moreover, it is not sufficient to assume that the availability of monitoring insights will lead to uptake and use. In practice, this can be in the form of formal training. However, some respondents recommend the help of external experts to facilitate the implementation of the monitoring system in the early stages as a form of capacity transfer. This was said to be more effective than formal once-off training.

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Alignment and Coordination of the Results-Based Monitoring System and the Organisational System

The extent to which proper arrangements for embedding new monitoring system processes within an existing operational and management protocol was identified as a critical factor for institutionalisation. In this case, respondents applied scrutiny to align proposed monitoring processes with existing operational and management procedures. Monitoring is intended as a management exercise and tool to ensure course correction during programme implementation. Practitioners argue that any activities performed as part of the monitoring process should not be divorced from the existing management protocol. They support the 'ideal' that monitoring should enhance and strengthen the managerial function. One respondent made the following remark: "There should never be parallel management systems. Monitoring is, by design, a management tool. Its objective is, and should be, to strengthen management by mainstreaming performance evidence."

Practitioners reported instances of decisions taken to change programme implementation approaches without consideration of monitoring insights, sometimes against the recommendations of monitoring reports. Another respondent reported changes in performance results (which have direct implications on what gets measured) without consultation with coordinators of monitoring personnel. Other examples include senior managers disregarding the role of monitoring in planning, or the misalignment between the programme monitoring framework and the human resource performance management framework. This results in the translation into parallel and unintegrated accountability systems. This misalignment leads to the 'strange' situation in which individual staff members can be rewarded for good performance while the organisation performs poorly against its targets.

Donor-funded organisations and jointly implemented initiatives are said to create an additional level of complexity to coordination and alignment. In these cases, the alignment challenge is not only between the results-based monitoring system and the existing organisational system, but also misalignment between the monitoring system of two organisations. In the case of a donor-funded organisation, the complexity is in aligning the monitoring and accountability system of the implementing organisation and the monitoring and accountability system of the funding organisation. In the case of jointly implemented initiatives, the challenge is in ensuring the alignment of the monitoring system of the two collaborating organisations.

Although there are varying levels of sophistication and complexities of misalignment in the different contexts, the challenges remain the same. This can be referred to as 'poor harmonisation' of systems. To remedy or mitigate this phenomenon, practitioners suggest that the design, introduction, and implementation of the results-based monitoring system needs to be intentional regarding the assessment

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of disparities between systems and must set a clear plan for addressing identified conflict to maximise harmonisation. As such, implementing agents need to plan for potential misalignment and lack harmonisation between systems.

Positioning of the Result-Based Monitoring System as a Learning Process

A common misconception of the role of monitoring is the view and fear that monitoring is a punitive measure intended to 'police' performance of staff. Individuals perceive monitoring as a means to expose poor performance. As a result, participation in the monitoring process tends to be done begrudgingly and with fear. This 'atmosphere' of participation can limit meaningful learning. An example, as stated by several practitioners, is when staff are selective and preservative about the type, magnitude, and frequency with which they volunteer needed monitoring data, thereby stifling the quality of monitoring reports and insight. This results in the limiting of management's ability to draw meaningful conclusions from the organisation's performance. Practitioners describe this situation as the effect of mispositioning monitoring as a punitive auditing process with the primary objective of finding fault in performance. They emphasise that this perception can be overcome by offering appropriate training regarding the fundamentals of M&E to the staff. Practitioners who have experienced successful implementation of monitoring systems confirmed that one of the benefits of good M&E training for staff is the result of enlightenment and managed fear of scrutiny.

Some respondents believe that the fear of scrutiny and policing that can come with a strong monitoring system can be a fair conclusion and an appropriate assessment of the role of monitoring. They assert that in inherently bureaucratic organisations driven by high levels of competitiveness and poor culture of learning, a monitoring system can easily contribute to the existing culture of 'policing'. In these situations, practitioners recommend training intended as a form of advocacy targeted at the policy-making levels of the organisation. In this case, M&E and RBM training objectives should include the influence of performance management policy in favour of optimal learning.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this section, the study attempts to ground its findings in organisational change theory. It uses empirical data collected from practitioners to test and discuss the four perspectives of organisational change. It ascertains whether each of the four perspectives holds true and whether they can provide valuable insights to explain the challenges for the institutionalisation of results-based monitoring systems.

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The Consequence of Change Theory Perspective

The consequence of change theory postulates that change failure is equivalent to 'organisational death' if the change includes changes to the core structures of the organisation. The study established that any introduction of the results-based monitoring system is tantamount to changes in articulating the organisation's goals, shifts in implementation, accountability mechanisms, and communications and marketing. The introduction of results-based monitoring is inevitably a shift in the organisational core structure.

When the consequence of change theory was tested against the experiences from respondents, the study found that this perspective holds selectively. Respondents from organisations that showed good levels of adoption of results-based monitoring reported instances of radical changes. The slowing down of the change process mitigated experiences of management discomfort and diminishing participation, as seen by performance reflections led by monitoring functions. Interestingly, the study also found that respondents and organisations who experienced radical changes were also the same organisations who (as part of the introduction of the monitoring system) mainstreamed evidence use and learning as core to their strategy. Examples of such organisations include ones that identify as 'Development Think-Tanks', 'Thought-leaders', and Innovation-driven organisations. There is significant reliance on systemically and accurately collected monitoring data for learning and innovation as the primary purpose in all these organisations. And thus, in this context, it should be expected that new evidence is likely to affect the organisations' core structures significantly.

Several of the remaining respondents reported a contradictory view. This group experienced the development and implementation of results-based monitoring systems as being intentional in the lack of change to the core structures of the organisations. Rather, the monitoring systems were designed to adapt to, match, and complement existing management systems and existing systems of decision-making and accountability. Therefore, organisational goals, operating patterns, authority mechanisms, and communication approaches were used as inputs to M&E framework design. In these organisations, the monitoring systems serve only the role of systematically collecting performance information, without altering operating norms, and availing insights for moments of reflection and decision-making as dictated by the management 'rhythm' of organisations. In this case, the monitoring function operates independently and parallel to other organisational procedures.

For such parallel systems, two distinct behavioural observations are made. The first observation is that management dynamically shifts mandate without due process, and often without communication to the monitoring function, and as such, the

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monitoring function is always "playing catch-up". This leads to misalignment between the constantly changing mandate and what gets measured. Respondents describe this observation as a means for management to escape accountability. In other words, management overly shifts mandates to escape accountability. In the second observation, the parallel structure encourages management to use the monitoring function as a communication channel to report positive performance narratives. For this group of organisations, there is a strong expectation from management that the monitoring function should affirm the rhetoric of a positive performance story. This is particularly true for programme contexts where the introduction of the monitoring system is a function of donor or funder pressure and not necessarily a need for learning by management.

Structural Contingency Theory Perspective

Structural Contingency theory offers two arguments. The first argument is that demand for organisational change (demand for results-based management) is driven by changes in the market environment. The second argument is that organisations with more awareness and knowledge of the value of M&E invest more in the implementation of organisational change.

Most of the respondents found both arguments valid for implementing results-based monitoring systems. Respondents observed that results-based management and M&E are popular mechanisms to strengthen grant accountability and communicate progress among donors. As a result, it is generally difficult for implementing agencies to receive funding without demonstrating plans and capacity to conduct monitoring and evaluation. Even in instances where organisations do not have the technical capacity to manage a monitoring system, donors usually make the development of the M&E plan a condition for releasing funds, thereby compelling grantees to recruit an M&E partner. In these contexts, investment and resource allocation for the results-based monitoring system are easier to obtain. However, respondents argue that funder-pushed results-based monitoring systems can harm institutionalisation. They argue that, since the introduction of such a system is a function of pressure from funders, the implementation is primarily driven by the obligation to comply with funder requirements. However, the exception to this are instances in which the grantee organisation has an established good culture of evidence use. In this case, support and push from the funder can expedite and strengthen the institutionalisation of the results-based monitoring system.

Although it is generally agreed that good awareness and grounded knowledge of RBM and M&E makes the institutionalisation process 'smoother', knowledge alone is insufficient to deepen the institutionalisation. Respondents caution that "just because people know better, does not mean they will do better". They warn that although knowledge is necessary, structural dynamics like incentives, politics, and

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values can influence behaviour more powerfully than knowledge and awareness can. They moderate the M&E capacity-building interventions that offer and focus solely on staff training and recommend that training interventions are more effective when other organisational factors are enabled.

Political Theory Perspective

It was confirmed across all cases that in each social programme or organisation, a coalition exists that is responsible for the critical 'contingency' of the whole. This grouping of the organisation is responsible for the core business of the programme or organisation and is referred to as the dominant coalition. The respondents agreed that any shift in the dominant coalition is tantamount to a shift in organisational strategy for or against the intended organisational change. One respondent explained that changes in the core workstreams of the education programme that they were implementing for two years always translated to changes in how monitoring was implemented across the programme. Dominant coalitions host the bulk of the monitoring effort and largely influence most of the monitoring processes. The coalition's resistance can easily lead to change or failure in the results-based monitoring system. Another response was that "chaos in the dominant coalition can lead to chaos in the entire change process".

The inverse of this political theory has also been proven to hold. Amongst respondents who experienced successes in institutionalising results-based monitoring systems, the influence and leadership of the dominant coalition in driving and normalising the use of monitoring insights proved to be effective in strengthening the monitoring system. Thus, when members of the dominant coalition are enlightened and technically capable, they lead the charge to build capacity across the rest of the organisation and champion M&E. Identifying and recruiting individual champions to act as ambassadors for the results-based monitoring system can be effective if the champions can influence the dominant coalition.

Institutional Theory Perspective

Finally, the institutional theory suggested that a results-based monitoring system can be more effectively institutionalised if its implementation is set as an official rule. i.e., endorsing and setting the implementation of the monitoring system as organisational policy deepens the change process. The study experienced inconclusive findings concerning this view, as the respondents were almost equally split between two categories of experiences. In one category of experiences, making reporting and reflection a compulsory activity with clear templates and guidelines assisted in the standardisation of the quality of reporting and ensured the conversion of insights to a decision. For example, an explicit agreement and contract between donors and grantees that obligates grantees to report progress has consistently improved

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commitment to the implementation of results-based monitoring systems. However, it is important to note that this is only successful if other enabling factors, such as adequate capacity, understanding of the value of performance evidence, and clear and user-friendly guidelines, are in place. Thus, a rule on its own is not sufficient in the attainment of institutionalisation.

In the other category of experiences, it was found that an obligation to produce funder reports through standardised templates does not necessarily foster the adoption of the concomitant monitoring system. Instead, reporting is done purely as a compliance exercise that is misaligned to systems or organisational learning. Respondents emphasised that a rule to report consistently must be matched by consequence to the rule and appropriate incentive to adhere and participate meaningfully. A rule to monitor and report on performance is unlikely to be adhered to when the perception is that the consequence is absent or weak.

Furthermore, grantees need to have appropriate incentives beyond the written or legal obligation to monitor progress to avoid compliance-driven monitoring and reporting. An example of such an incentive can be the belief in the likelihood of improving and enhancing performance due to monitoring insights. Therefore, the rule must be accompanied by a clear sense of consequence and appropriate incentive to adhere and participate meaningfully.

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