1. **Title:**

   Using evaluations for change – the experience of South Africa

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3. **Keywords:**

   Evaluation, government, utilization, South Africa

4. **Abstract text:**

   a. **Background and aims**

   This paper describes the attempts to introduce a utilization-focused national evaluation system in South Africa. It describes the change approach used, and the degree of success, and to what extent it can be related to these elements. As at April 2016 54 evaluations have been completed or planned, covering around US$ 7 billion of government expenditure on a wide range of government programmes, and the majority of these the recommendations are being implemented.

   b. **Method**

   The paper draws from an analytical framework derived by Goldman and Mathe building on large-scale organization change around M&E systems. This is used to analyse the South African experience and draw out lessons for utilization-focused evaluation systems.

   c. **Results**

   An emerging analysis was undertaken two years ago for a chapter in a book on Evaluation Management in South Africa. This will be updated for this paper, and also draw from Michael Quinn Patten's work on utilization-focused evaluation.

   d. **Conclusions**

   A number of **preconditions** are identified including role of a powerful and capable central 'champion'; sustained political will and a coalition to support; utilisation seen as the measure of 'success'; substantive government demand; the importance of incentives and a performance management/M&E system which promotes interaction, variety, and is dynamic.

   A number of **process** issues are also identified ranging from clear diagnosis of the existing situation and an understanding of where delivery must improve to the role of structural arrangements to ensure M&E objectivity and quality and reliable ministry data systems.

Element	Importance
Enabling conditions	
Key role of a powerful and capable central 'champion' with sustained political will for the long haul and a coalition to support.	Critical.
Utilisation seen as the measure of 'success'.	Critical and the focus has been appreciated.
Substantive government demand.	The system has been designed as demand-led. Does seem to be critical.
The importance of establishing incentives (including the ability to use hard and soft authority effectively to enforce change).	Incentives are critical and both soft (e.g. part-funding by DPME) and hard are likely to be important.
Performance management/M&E system which promotes interaction, variety, and is dynamic.	The effort to make a system which is seen to be widely owned, that departments can influence, that develops, seems to be contributing to acceptance.
The process	
A clear diagnosis of the existing situation and an understanding of where delivery must improve.	This aspect does not seem so essential if the right group of stakeholders with deep knowledge of the system comes together to design.
The reform strategy and plan defined before the structure, so a clear policy direction with a commitment to results.	It would appear to be critical to have a clear intent and approach before setting up structures.
The process should not rely on legislation and regulations to be implemented.	Legislation does not appear to be necessary before starting processes. Not being legislated also allows for systems to be developed and tested before freezing them in laws and regulations.
A clear and effective implementation strategy.	Critical.
A talented team to drive the system and solve problems early and rigorously.	Critical.
The courage to rethink processes completely.	New systems may be needed. Where there are none this is easier than where systems exist.
Experimentation, piloting and scaling-up.	Essential.
A major investment in communication.	Essential.
Care not to over-engineer the system.	Not clear from the examples.
Establishing the culture and capacity to analyse, learn, and use M&E evidence.	Critical.
Role of structural arrangements to ensure M&E objectivity and quality and reliable ministry data systems.	Critical. The belief that M&E systems are objective and valid is critical to the integrity and trust in the systems.