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FULL REPORT

Report on the Implementation Evaluation of the Management Performance Assessment Tool (MPAT)

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List of Acronyms

AG	Auditor-General
AoM	Areas of Management
APP	Annual Performance Plan
CCAP	Capacity and Compliance Assessment Panel
COG	Centre of Government
COGTA	(Department of) Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DCoG	Department of Cooperative Governance
DG	Director-General
DHoDs	Deputy Heads of Departments
DPME	Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
DPSA	Department of Public Service and Administration
ETWG	Expanded Technical Working Group
GPP	Governance Performance Project
HOD	Head of Department
HR	Human Resources
KPA	Key Performance Areas
MAF	Management Accountability Framework
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPAT	Management Performance Assessment Tool
MTSF	Medium Term Strategic Framework
NEPF	National Evaluations Policy Framework
ND	National Department
NDP	National Development Plan
NPM	New Public Management

NT	National Treasury
OAG	Office of the Auditor General
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OPMC	Office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
OPSC	Office of the Public Service Commission
OtP	Office of the Premier
PAIA	Promotion of Access to Information Act
PAJA	Promotion of Administrative Justice Act
PALAMA	Public Administration Leadership and Management Academy
PAT	Performance Assessment Tool
PFMA	Public Finance Management Act
PIF	Performance Informative Framework
POA	Programme of Action
PSA	Public Service Act
SALGA	South African Local Government Association
SSC	State Services Commission
TBCS	Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat
TOR	Terms of Reference
Wits	University of Witwatersrand

Executive Summary

Introduction

The Implementation Evaluation of the Management Performance Assessment Tool (MPAT) was conducted by PDG as part of the National Evaluation Plan of 2013/2014 of the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) in the Presidency. The following executive summary sets out the purpose of the evaluation before presenting the findings, conclusions and recommendations.

Purpose of the evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation as stated in the Terms of Reference was to “determine whether MPAT is improving management practices in national and provincial departments. The findings will assist DPME to determine the appropriateness of the framework, its effect on management practices, and how it can be improved” (DPME, 2014a: 2).

Findings and Conclusions

While MPAT intends to be designed for assessing management performance, in reality it is a sophisticated, nuanced, compliance assessment of management practice, comparable with the best known international practice. Management practice is defined as the sets of requirements (policies, plans, behaviours) required by public management policy and regulation, as an assumed precondition for the achievement of policy outcomes that describe a well-managed public service, defined here as management performance.

MPAT’s design is limited by

- an emphasis on the purpose of assessment rather than the purpose of improvement,
- a conceptual conflation of management practice and management performance, which are interrelated but distinct
- insufficient KPAs to fully address the contemporary public management challenge,
- imbalance in the measures and composition of some standards,
- inadequate mechanisms for :
 - horizontal learning and improvement
 - support by relevant transversal departments
 - responsive refinement of the standards for validity and sufficiency
 - review and refinement of public management policies that underpin the standards

Of all the other public management tools or processes being used to assess the public service in similar areas to MPAT, the Audit Outcomes of the AG are the most similar. There is a fair amount of duplication and overlap with aspects of the AG audits. Despite posited relationships and apparent congruence between certain MPAT standards and areas of AG findings, the actual correlations are not particularly strong.

Although MPAT is only 4 years old, it is a successful programme of public management assessment, taken seriously by its participants and valued by its stakeholders. Participation is effectively 100% in government, as required by a cabinet resolution, which does raise the potential for malicious compliance potentially undermining MPAT's learning and improvement intentions. MPAT is supported by strong primary partnerships of three key transversal departments, although institutional arrangements can be strengthened and formalised. DPME as the implementing department has been described as responsive and adaptive, introducing new tools, process elements and actioning feedback, particularly where standards are problematic and need refinement.

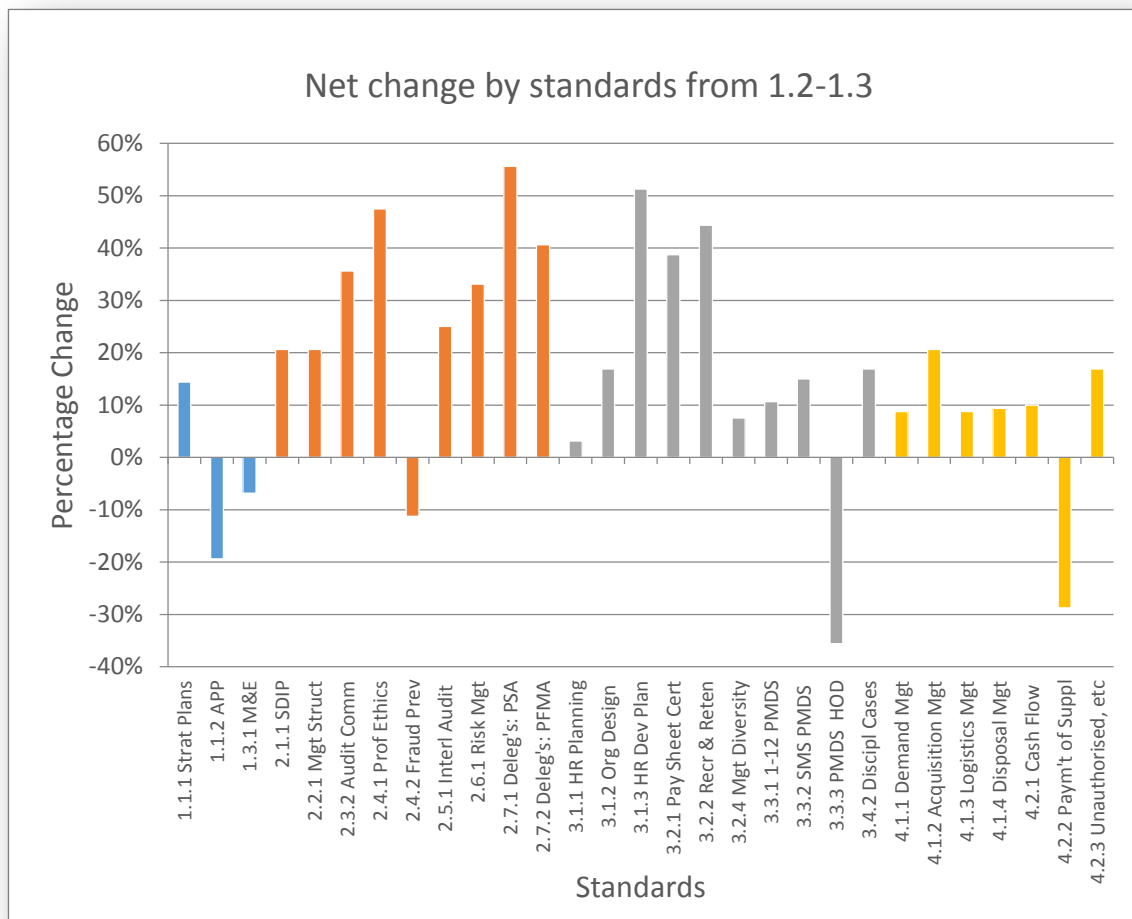
However, there were also areas that are not working well and in need of improvement. The following highlights those areas:

- Scheduling and predictability of MPAT timing
- Functionality of technology used
- Moderation & challenge process
- Human and financial resourcing
- Knowledge sharing and learning
- Support from transversal departments
- Appropriateness of policies that MPAT assesses
- The intended purpose of accountability for performance

Year on year comparison of ratings on MPAT shows some evidence of improvements between MPAT 1.2 and 1.3. Of the 29 standards applied across the two cycles, 24 standards saw a net improvement in scores while 5 standards saw a net regression.

Figure 1: Net change in score by standard from MPAT 1.2-1.3

It can be cautiously stated that there is evidence of uneven improvements in management practices. Whether these can be causally attributed to MPAT cannot be conclusively determined based on this evaluation design. Further, there is shortage of available data and insufficient analyses necessary to



determine whether the posited improvement in management performance has indeed followed. However, where data does exist, such as in relation to specified human resources management standards, there is no indication, as yet, that improved management practice results in desired management performance improvements. This means that the appropriateness of these standards and the policies that underpin them are in need of regular review.

Evidence shows that 97.8% of accounting officers surveyed consider MPAT results to be useful to some extent. Departments tend to utilise these results for raising awareness of management practice strengths and weaknesses, accountability as well as for undertaking improvements and corrections.

There is evidence that some OtPs have taken the lead by using MPAT results to coordinate and drive improvements in management practice throughout their

provinces, although this is not in all cases and would appear dependent on OtP capacity.

DPME has used MPAT results to continuously improve and adapt its role as custodian of government planning, monitoring and evaluation. This has included pioneering other tools modelled on MPAT at the local government level and in relation to performance monitoring and evaluation.

There is limited evidence that DPSA or National Treasury are using the results to target interventions or provided individual departmental support in the process of undertaking improvements except where specifically requested.

At this time there is some evidence to suggest that the National Assembly is using MPAT results, but little to suggest provincial legislatures are meaningfully using MPAT as part of their oversight responsibilities.

Recommendations

The overarching recommendation is to continue with this programme and build on the energy and momentum it has developed. The following are the recommendations distinguished between the programme design, system and institutional arrangements.

Programme Design Recommendations

1. Clarify the nature of MPAT as a programme, together with its ownership and key -role-players.
2. Clarify the distinction between management practice and management performance.
3. Clarify and define the purpose of MPAT as supporting learning and improvement within departments and across government.
4. The focus areas and standards of MPAT should be reviewed, with an intention to include asset management and information management.
5. The MPAT design and programme theory should emphasise horizontal learning and knowledge sharing as a key mechanism of change.
6. The support roles and responsibilities that partner departments play in terms of the development and implementation of departmental improvement plans should be clarified.
7. MPAT programme design should explicitly cater for the ongoing review of standards and underlying policy.

System Development Recommendations

- 8.** The MPAT intervention should be augmented to include a monitoring system on management performance indicators.
- 9.** The current KPAs and standards should be scrutinised and refined, mainly to separate management practice and performance and to specify the results chain for each.
- 10.** The scheduling of MPAT processes should be predictable and allow departments adequate time for self-assessment, uploading and submission and for results to most effectively inform improvement planning.
- 11.** The MPAT website should be improved in terms of ease of access, duration of availability and capacity of traffic volumes before the next round.
- 12.** The moderation process should be revised to ensure a commonly agreed level of moderator expertise or experience.
- 13.** A formal procedure and tracking system for handling all moderation challenges received should be implemented with provisions for direct engagement where feasible and appropriate.
- 14.** A mechanism should be put in place for the regular review or evaluation of policies included in MPAT, triggered by an analysis of MPAT scores.
- 15.** A longitudinal impact study should be undertaken to evaluate the relationship between MPAT standards, management performance and service delivery performance.

Institutional Arrangement Recommendations

- 16.** A new charter or MOU should be developed between the partners, based on a review of partnership arrangements.
- 17.** A structure to co-ordinate the partnership that manages MPAT should be formalised, with a terms of reference.
- 18.** Partner departments should take on the role of providing improvement support.
- 19.** Multi-departmental, multi-sphere funding for resourcing cross-cutting programme across partner departments should be considered.

1. Introduction

The Management Performance Assessment Tool (MPAT) was proposed for evaluation as part of the National Evaluation Plan of 2013/2014. The assessment was planned and commissioned by the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) in the Presidency as part of the National Evaluation System.

The National Evaluation Policy Framework (NEPF) provides the national framework for typologies of evaluations and their respective purposes. In terms of the NEPF, an implementation evaluation of the MPAT was initiated in June of 2014 with PDG appointed to conduct the assessment. The following report sets out the background to the assessment, the methodology employed, the findings and analysis, before arriving at conclusions and recommendations.

1.1 Purpose of the evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation as stated in the Terms of Reference was to “determine whether MPAT is improving management practices in national and provincial departments. The findings will assist DPME to determine the appropriateness of the framework, its effect on management practices, and how it can be improved” (DPME, 2014a: 2).

The NEPF sets out the aims of an implementation evaluation as, “to evaluate whether an intervention’s operational mechanisms support achievement of the objectives or not and understand why” (DPME, 2011e). In this case, the focus is on addressing whether after three cycles if the operational processes of MPAT are realising the desired improvements in management practice and performance in national and provincial government departments. Key concepts relevant to this evaluation design are defined in DPME Evaluation Guideline No 2.2.12 – Guideline on Implementation Evaluation (2014b).¹

1.2 Evaluation questions

Six evaluation questions were provided for the assessment to address. These evaluation questions have been re-arranged since the terms of reference to be consistent with the evaluation design. The six questions this evaluation addresses are:

¹ Accessible at www.presidency-dpme.gov.za

- i. To what extent is the design of MPAT appropriate to assess management performance, notably the four KPAs and the indicators that are being used?
- ii. Which other tools in the public service are assessing the same areas/standards as MPAT? What is the extent of the similarities, differences and the correlation (if any) of the MPAT results and is MPAT sourcing appropriately the data from other departments for its 4 KPAs?
- iii. Which public service institutions are using the MPAT results? How are they utilising them and what are the benefits?
- iv. What is working well and what is not working well with MPAT and the process used?
- v. Is there evidence that national and provincial departments have improved their management practices as a result of the MPAT process? If so, to what extent has this happened?
- vi. How can MPAT (the framework and tool) be strengthened or changed to improve the attainment of its intended objective?

2. Background and Literature Review

The following section presents the background to the intervention before comparing and contrasting it with similar international practices. It concludes with the presentation of the previously implicit, validated theory of change developed for this assignment.

2.1 Summarizing the problem statement

In 2010 the President met with the Directors-General to discuss why the quality of service delivery was not reflecting the resources going into the machinery of government. The thinking was that effective and efficient administrative machinery is necessary in order to successfully implement policies and programmes.

The MPAT is built on the idea that “The quality of management practices - how we plan; how we manage staff, finances, and infrastructure; how we govern ourselves and how we account for our performance - has a significant influence on the quality of the outputs our department produces, the outcomes achieved, and ultimately, the impact our services have on society. Therefore, to improve the performance of a department, it is essential that the management practices of a department are assessed and strengthened. Good management practice is a precondition for effective, sustainable service delivery.” (Presidency, 2012: 8)

Government’s overall performance monitoring system did not provide an overview of the management of the public sector as a whole, although the Department of Public Service Administration (DPSA), National Treasury (NT), the Auditor-General (AG) and Office of the Public Service Commission (OPSC) do all have their individual and focused core mandates, but it did have transversal perspectives on some of the key areas of management. A need was identified for a tool that would assess the health of management practices of a department and provide the basis to compare all the departments in the public service as a system, while moving beyond the compliance focus of an audit, to focusing on working smartly (Review Report, 2014).

2.2 History of the MPAT development process

An exercise to diagnose how service delivery could be improved was undertaken in 2010, and a public service delegation undertook a study trip to Canada to study the Management Accountability Framework (MAF)(Review Report, 2014). The delegation included staff from the Technical Assistance Unit of the National Treasury, staff from the DPME and the DPSA. The study tour was considered a success by participants and “by the time the study tour was over, a concept note had already been developed” (Review Report, 2014).

A Technical Committee of senior officials from NT, DPSA and DPME led the development of MPAT. In addition DPME consulted the Department of Cooperative Governance (DCoG), the Public Administration Leadership and Management Academy (PALAMA) and the Offices of the Premiers (Presidency, 2012: 5). The support and levels of engagement with the key partners, DPSA and NT notably, have fluctuated over time. These two partner departments are each the 'owners' of one of the four KPAs – National Treasury of financial management and DPSA of human resource management (Review Report, 2014).

On 22 June 2011 Cabinet approved DPME's proposal to develop and pilot MPAT and mandated the roll out of MPAT. MPAT 1.1 was launched in October 2011 and the results presented to Cabinet in June 2012. A total of 30 national departments and 73 provincial departments across eight provinces participated in the first iteration. This reflects 65% of all national and provincial departments submitted self-assessments. Work immediately began on MPAT 1.2 which was launched in September 2012 and completed in May 2013 with the results made public in September 2013. Following considerable pressure from Cabinet, all national and provincial departments participated in version 1.2 of MPAT, but some HoDs were reluctant to sign off on the use of the electronic system. Refinements were made to the tool and MPAT 1.3 was launched in September 2013 and the results presented to Cabinet in June 2014. Again, all national and provincial departments participated in 1.3 and for the first time all the HoDs signed off the self-assessments on the electronic system (Review Report, 2014).

2.3 Key design features

2.3.1 Key principles of MPAT

One of the earliest articulations of MPAT, the Workshop Report of the PAT tool (2011) describes the assessment approach as "affirming and enabling rather than evaluative and punitive" (Presidency, 2011c: 12). MPAT was conceptualised initially as a developmental tool where the self-assessment would culminate in a frank and honest senior management discussion leading to learning and improvement. However, by the time the first report got to Cabinet there was a strong accountability element to it. The emphasis in the first round was its voluntary nature, that progress was the objective, not the absolute score, which was more important than the score in demonstrating a commitment to learning and improvement (Review Report, 2014). Many of the principles informing the design of MPAT point to its role as a developmental tool. The following reflect some of the key principles as articulated in MPAT documentation:

- Progressive improvement in management performance

- Ownership of assessment process, results and improvements
- Simple processes and tools
- Evidence-based approach
- Assessment beyond compliance
- Using existing regulations, policies and frameworks
- Continuous improvement of MPAT (Presidency, 2012: 10).

2.3.2 Key Performance Areas and Standards

The MPAT process is designed to assess the quality of management practices in four key performance areas (KPA). In the tool each KPA is broken down into specific sub-performance areas. Each of these specific performance areas is assessed through a set of prioritized quality standards (Presidency, 2011d: 5). Each MPAT standard is defined according to four levels (see the Literature Review annexure for more details).

Beyond research, a consultation process including workshops and meetings, partners were invited to contribute standards, and a document was put together proposing all the MPAT standards. At meeting in August 2011, designated KPA commissions confirmed and refined the standards for each KPA and then developed the questions for each standard that make up the self-assessment tool (Presidency, 2011a: 5).

Attention was turned to the levels and what would constitute good practice at each of the levels. DPME engaged with the different policies and legislation governing each KPA including: Financial Management – the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) and Treasury Regulations; Human Resources Management – the Public Service Act (PSA) and Regulations; Strategic Management – Treasury and Public Service Regulations; Governance and Accountability – PFMA, PSA, the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act (PAJA) and the Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA). Distilling the standards from policies and statutes, level 3 was set out as compliance with them, while level 4 was intended to demonstrate successful practice beyond compliance (Review Report, 2014).

The following four KPAs are:

KPA 1: Strategic Management- it “includes the deployment and implementation of the strategic plan throughout the organisation, the measurement and evaluation of results, and the implementation of improvements based on monitoring and evaluation.” (Presidency, 2013a: 17)

KPA 2: Governance and Accountability- focusing “on a select number of management practices that underpin good governance and promote accountability in public administration.” (Presidency, 2013a: 21).

KPA 3: Human Resource Management - addresses the quality of human resource management practices as they influence on the overall performance of the organisation and its delivery of services (Presidency, 2013a: 27).

KPA 4: Financial Management – builds on the work of the Accountant General of National Treasury to assess the economic use of public finances (Presidency, 2013a: 33-34).

MPAT iterations over time

Over the course of four years of implementation, the four KPAs have remained constant through the 3 cycles of the document but some of the sub-performance areas and standards have changed. In all instances changes have been minimized to allow comparability between years. Minor changes in KPA 1- Strategic Management and KPA 3- Human Resource Management have been noted, while more substantial changes following the first year of MPAT have been documented in KPA 2- Governance and Accountability and KPA 4- Financial Management (See Appendix on Literature Review for full details).

2.3.3 Process design

The assessment process moves through three stages:

- Self-assessment and internal validation
- External moderation and feedback
- Improve and monitor (Presidency, 2012).

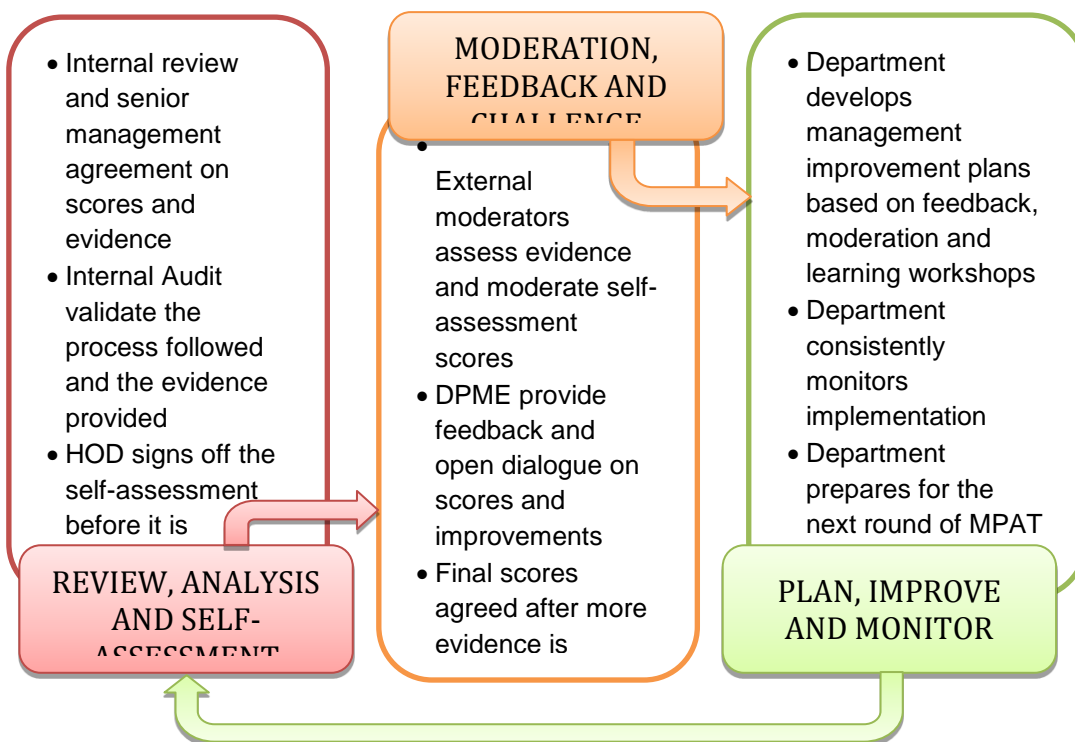


Figure 2: MPAT implementation process
(Source: Presidency, 2014: 14)

2.3.4 Implementation and iterations

MPAT grew very fast through the stages of an idea mooted in response to the need for improvement in service delivery, to a pilot, and then national roll out. Since the initial pilot, there have been four cycles of MPAT, the first three of which fall within the scope of this assessment. MPAT 1.1 (2011/12); MPAT 1.2 (2012/13); and MPAT (2013/14). The latter two iterations introducing an electronic platform for self-assessment and capturing of evidence, as well as the introduction of a moderation and challenge phase. The introduction of these elements is particularly important as they pertain to the implementation of the intervention. See the Literature Review in the appendix for more details.

2.4 Overview of the international context

2.4.1 Managing for performance and management performance

Moynihan and Pandey (2004:422) explain that a common assumption across literature is “that management matters to performance and effectiveness, and that performance is the ultimate goal of public management systems and actions”. Further, they suggest it is possible to divide explanatory factors of performance into two categories: environmental factors and organisational factors. Public management is thereby distinguished by two challenges in the pursuit of performance: managing the external environment and managing the organisation.

Other public sector management literature highlights the importance of both and notes that public sector management does not occur in a vacuum, and requires an enabling environment. This is only possible with strong political support, leadership and resources for building and utilising management capacity (Moynihan & Pandey, 2004: 423). There is the basic assumption that management matters to performance and that it is reasonable to expect managers to undertake actions to improve performance. But there are other important environmental factors beyond the control of managers which influence performance including support among elected officials and the influence of the public and the media. Managers do not control all the levers that shape performance, a fact that should be kept in mind when demanding accountability (Moynihan & Pandey, 2004: 423).

In public sector performance management New Zealand differentiates between performance for the beneficiaries (e.g. results) and management performance (e.g. operations and process efficiencies and effectiveness), although not precisely in these terms. Nevertheless, distinguishing between these two major dimensions and borrowing heavily from private sector concepts, the manager of the state as “owner of the business” has interests that include the scope of the business, the capability and viability of the organisation in terms of its resources

and assets, avoidance of risk and the financial bottom line, particularly as they influence sustained efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery. Meanwhile, citizens or “customers” are interested in the appropriateness, quality, cost, and timeliness of what is delivered. The distinction helps to differentiate between a broader management practice that manages for results, and that of management performance internal to the organisation, often considered a pre-requisite for performance (Ecorys, 2011: 58-59).

This distinction is important because the link between management and performance has often been made for many years, although not always explicitly and with clear definitions. Although there are common threads in public management research to tackle the issue of how management matters to performance, definitions of management, administration and performance have all varied considerably, along with the concept of capacity. Ingraham et al (2003) argue that management capacity can be defined by the strength of, and integration among, management systems. The advantage of this definition is that management systems are amenable to standardisation, analysis and comparison, whereas the nature of management capacities from department to department within government may not be. Further, public managers have widely acknowledged the value of management systems as a performance improvement tool and as a policy lever over which they have substantial influence (Ingraham, 2001; Moynihan & Ingraham, 2011; in Ingraham et al, 2003: 299-300).

The following figure sets out how management capacity, comprising a set of management sub-systems, collectively integrates to determine programme delivery in what is a results-based management model of public management capacity for the public sector.

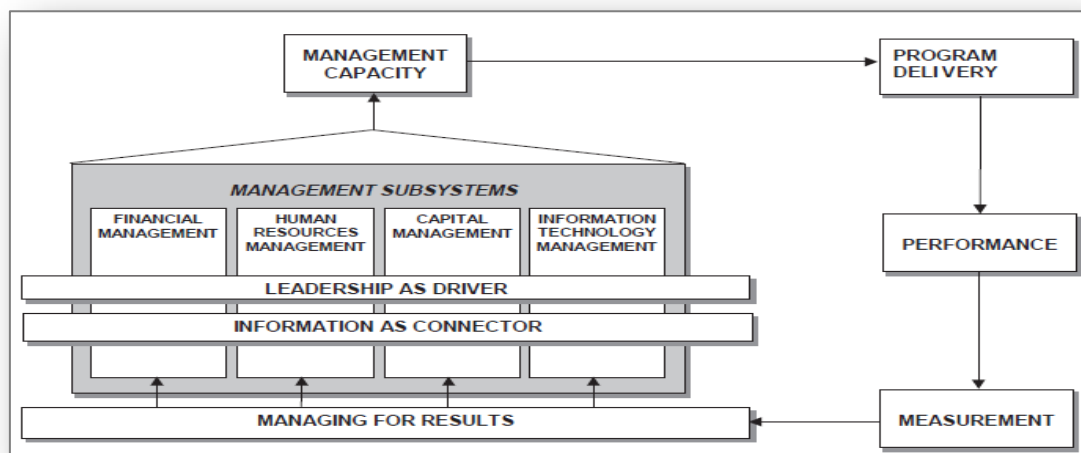


Figure 3: Black Box Model of Public Management capacity
(Source: Ingraham et al, 2003: 298)

The model above was developed as part of the Government Performance Project (GPP) in the United States and distinguishes between four management subsystems that make up management capacity. Ingraham et al (2003) argued that better specification of management capacity was necessary before more plausible theoretical or empirical links could be established between management and performance. The assumption in the model is that management capacity is a “platform” for performance and that performance data would inform future capacity changes. By setting out four management subsystems the basis for clearly and concisely defining the desirable quality of a management system and judging the extent to which these qualities were in place in a particular organisation at a time was established. This model was subsequently applied for assessment and across the USA’s 50 states in 2005 and 2008, using the refined management sub-system criteria titles of: People, Money, Infrastructure and Information (GPP, 2005; 2008).

2.4.2 International experiences

The Management Performance Assessment Tool (MPAT) developed in South Africa was informed by other international experiences, borrowing some of its distinctive features from other international practice, notably that of the Canadian Management Accountability Framework (MAF). The examples used in this study look at MAF, and the New Zealand model of Performance Informative Framework (PIF) which highlights a range of similarities and differences that are evident in the initial concept of the South African Performance Assessment Tool (PAT) and subsequent iterations of MPAT. The following are some other international examples that provide a basis for comparison.

Canada’s Management Accountability Framework (MAF)

The Canadian MAF was introduced in 2003 as a performance management framework that would be used across the federal government to support the management accountability of the Deputy Heads of Departments (DHoDs) and to improve management practices. The MAF framework aims to foster sound public sector management practices and performance. The MAF stresses the use and encouragement of the management accountability of organizational deputy heads to improve management practices across government departments and agencies (TBCS, 2014).

Some of the objectives of MAF are:

- To obtain an organizational and government-wide view of the state of management practices and performance;
- To inform Deputy Ministers and Heads of Agencies about their organizations’ management capacity;

- To inform the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat about the state of policy implementation and practices;
- To identify areas of management strength and any areas that require attention;
- To communicate and track progress on government-wide management priorities; and,
- To continuously improve management capabilities, effectiveness and efficiency government-wide (TBCS, 2014).

The diagram below represents a basic programme theory for MAF. Through this approach certain conditions and management practices need to be in place for strong organizational performance to flourish.

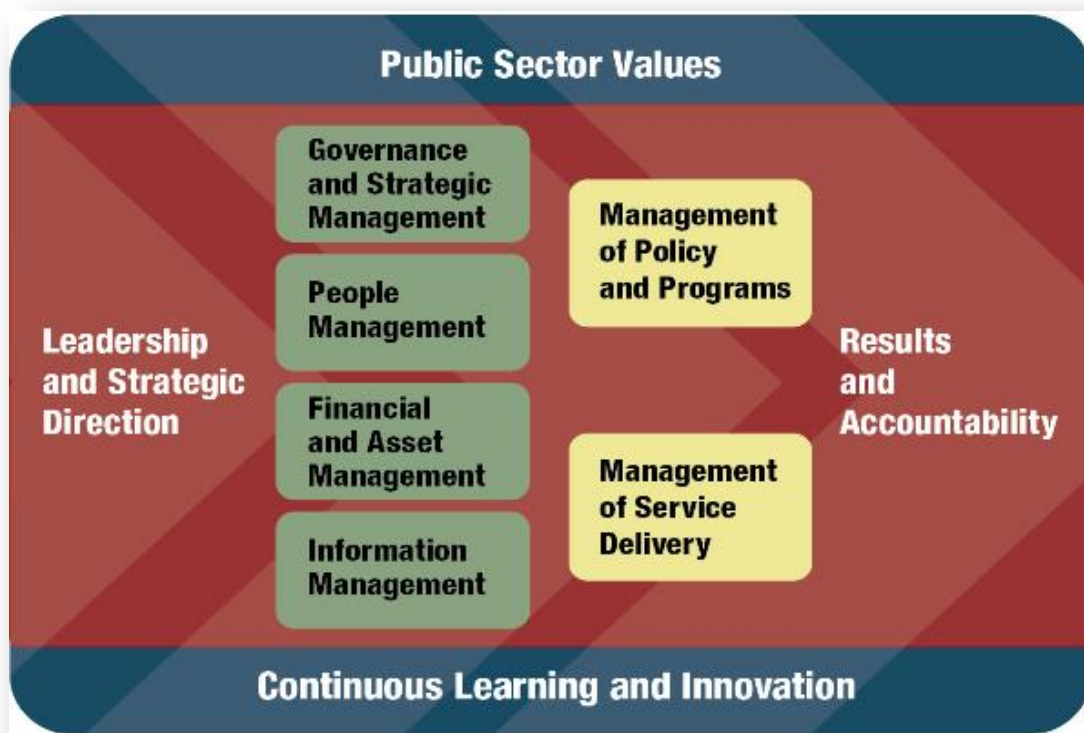


Figure 4: MAF programme theory (Source: TBCS, 2014)

The above figure sets out a basic programme theory for management performance. It indicates that if leadership and strategic direction is provided across four core management areas and these areas are regularly assessed, imbued with public sector values and within a context of continuous learning and improvement, this will lead to the effective management of policies and programmes and the management of service delivery. This in turn will produce the results and accountability that the Canadian people demand from their government.

The MAF features and process

The MAF assessment process focuses on four core management areas. It entails an assessment based on the key “expectations of public sector managers and deputy heads in specific Areas of Management (AoM) and measures organisational performance against these expectations. Each Area of Management represents a key internal business function that is critical to a strong performing organization” (TBCS, 2014).

These core AoMs are seen to be the most crucial and centred on achieving good management within departments. Departments who take part in MAF are assessed on an annual basis on the following core management areas:

- Financial Management;
- Information Management and Information Technology (IM/IT) Management;
- Management of Integrated Risk, Planning and Performance; and,
- People Management.

In addition, select organisations are assessed annually on one or more of the following department-specific management areas, when there is a strong alignment between a department or agency’s operations and one of the following AoMs:

- Management of Acquired Services and Assets;
- Security Management; and,
- Service Management.

The premise around the MAF assumes that if management functions are working well internally, then service delivery should be improved and more rigorous. However, it was noted that no correlation study had been done to account and link performance management and the quality of delivery (The Presidency, 2011c: 34).

Results of applying MAF

In November 2008, Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBCS) commissioned PricewaterhouseCoopers/Interis to conduct an independent Five-year Evaluation of MAF. The objective of the evaluation was to:

- Evaluate how TBS is assessing public sector management practices and performance within and across the Federal government (i.e., is MAF relevant, successful and cost-effective);
- Compare MAF as a tool for assessing public sector management practices and performance across jurisdictions; and

- Identify and recommend areas for improvement to MAF as an assessment tool and its supporting reporting requirements, tools and methodologies (Dantzler, 2009).

In a presentation given by the Canadians in 2011 to the South African Government, specifically DPME, the reflection around the lessons learned based on a five year experience of implementing the MAF included:

- Leadership at the top is critical to improve management practices
- Recognise at the outset that managing with a focus on results requires a culture shift and that progress will take time and sustained focus
- Performance pay of Deputy Heads should be linked to management performance
- Performance management assessments should be constructive and encourage continuous improvement, not be a means to penalize organizations
- Assessment tools need to be kept evergreen and room needs to be left for good judgment and contextualization (The Presidency, 2011c:8)

In light of these conclusions it is important to understand that although the MAF has also made significant changes and improvements to its design over time, there was a clear understanding of the alignment of reporting and its need to effectively speak to the timing of the MAF process to ensure consistency with system expectations. However, the way in which governments are faced with being more accountable to citizens and state resources, one is able to see the important role MAF plays as being a powerful instrument in assisting with the improvement of management practices within departments and other organisations across their government. It focuses on key components needed for “sound management in government and ensures that the federal public service continues to focus on management excellence and the delivery of effective programs and services to Canadians” (TBCS, 2014).

New Zealand

New Zealand is widely recognized as “being one the most advanced states in the world in terms of monitoring and assessing performance within its government departments” (Ecorys, 2011: 49). It undertook major economic reforms between the late 1980s and 1990s due to the rise of New Public Management. The rolling back of government and tightening of expenditure coincided with the government introducing new economic reforms that would directly impact on the public management terrain. These included greater expectations around compliance.

Within this context, there has been a demand for more rich and innovative concepts to be put in place to improving management practices. In New

Zealand “the underlying concept of the system is a results-based public management system, operating on an output budgeting framework and foundation, aimed to deliver effectiveness and efficiency of performance in output service delivery and achievement of outcomes for the community” (Ecorys, 2011: 57).

The Performance Improvement Framework (PIF), in conjunction with support from other central agencies such as Treasury, Office of the Auditor General (OAG) and the Office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (OPMC), is comprised of two major components: Results and Organisational Management. Each of these components has separately defined their own constituting Critical Areas. The Results component looks at Delivery of Government Priorities and Delivery of Core Business, whilst the Organisational Management has four Critical Areas of: Leadership, Direction and Delivery; External Relationships; People Development; Financial and Resource Management. There are 17 elements in total across the four Critical Areas of the Organisational Management component. The figure below illustrates the relationship between these organizational management areas, government’s core business, and the delivery of government priorities.

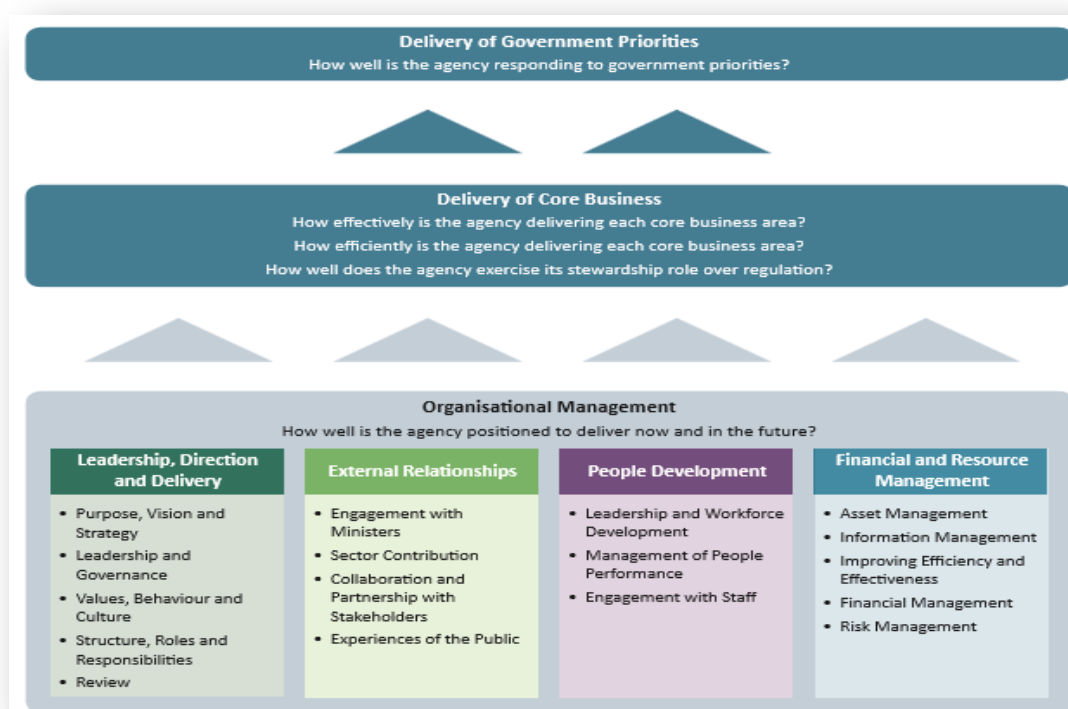


Figure 5: New Zealand Performance Improvement Framework model
(Source: State Services Commission, The Treasury and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2014: 1)

The model is distinct because it sees the regulation of organisational management as key to delivering its core business and realizing government priorities. Specifically, in New Zealand “regulation is a key intervention government uses to achieve its goals. Regulation works largely because people are happy to abide by rules they see as legitimate, so the way regulation is developed, administered and enforced is fundamental to regulatory effectiveness. Part of that legitimacy is an acceptance that regulation adds value for the community, in excess of the cost of that regulation” (State Services Commission, The Treasury and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2014: 11). The premise behind this model resonates on the level of organisational capability rather than the operational level of service delivery output performance.

The success of this model in New Zealand stems in part from the favourable public sector environment in which it is embedded. The system is therefore more conducive and accepting of the regulation of organizational management towards results.

2.5 MPAT international comparative analysis

A common design feature amongst MAF, PIF and the Management Capacity Model developed for the Governance Performance Project is the four dimensions of management that feature across all of these. Whether they're referred to as systems comprising management capacity, critical areas of organisational management, or areas of management, they are all dealing with those aspects of management which if in place, are believed to be critical determinants of good performance. Amongst these, financial management and human resources stand out as two consistent, seemingly universal public sector management areas that appear across all different countries and assessment models, including in South Africa.

Like the design and conceptualization of the MPAT, the PIF came from a study tour that was commissioned by the Prime Minister of New Zealand at the time. The story is told that “in 2009, Iain Rennie and the Chief Executive of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, now Sir Maarten Wevers, travelled to the United Kingdom to meet with the Cabinet Secretary of the British Civil Service. The origins of the Performance Improvement Framework (PIF) are in those discussions with the Cabinet Secretary, and now Right Honourable, Lord Gus O'Donnell. On their return to New Zealand, Iain and Sir Maarten commissioned a team from across the State Services to take the best of the United Kingdom's Capability Review Programme and the best of the organisational improvement models from the New Zealand private sector, as well as methodologies from other jurisdictions, and adapt them to the New Zealand public management system” (SSC, 2014).

New Zealand's Performance Improvement Framework (PIF) works with four key areas: Leadership and Direction, External Relationships, People Development and Financial and Resource Management. The New Zealand Performance Assessment Tool (PAT) is also a self-assessment tool and interestingly it operates on a cost recovery basis (Ecorys, 2011: 7). It also provides for an improvement plan, similar to the MPAT expectation.

The sophistication of the system driving management performance plays a crucial role in the capability of the country to deliver and better understand performance and its implementation mechanisms. The PIF came at the central level of government and has had a top-down approach like that of the South African tool. Although not a federal state, South Africa also rests its state powers centrally where there is an autonomous nature at lower levels of government, however the monitoring pressures stemmed from the pressures of the public service and delivery outcomes.

Where there is some difference in these models is how Leadership and Strategic Direction are treated. In Canada, it is considered to be an input to the overall theory of public sector management for results and accountability. However, in New Zealand it is one of the organisational management areas, with some overlaps with the Governance and Strategic Management AoM in Canada. But what New Zealand introduces distinct to the other models is a management area dedicated to external relationships. Interestingly, this in some ways addresses Moynihan and Pandey's (2004) critique of the absence of environmental considerations in models for public management performance by dedicating a management area specifically to those external stakeholders who exert pressure and shape the environmental conditions.

Amongst the three AoMs that the Canadian MAF selectively applies based on the mandate of the department there is also Management of Acquired Services and Assets AoM (TBCS, 2014), which in some ways resonates with the Capital Management system in the Governance Performance Project Model (GPP, 2005; 2008). The New Zealand Performance Improvement Framework also provides for asset management as a sub-area within the Financial and Resource Management Critical area (State Services Commission, 2009). This suggests that since departments are also responsible for the management of a substantial amount of state assets and infrastructure, that a specific set of measurement standards for this area of management may be necessary. Currently, MPAT only provides for one standard related to infrastructure, while all of the other international case studies elevate this to either the equivalent of a performance area or a sub-performance area. The MAF model introduces an element of differentiation amongst departments, recognizing that there are both generic management areas, as well as some that need to be customized to the particular mandate of a given department.

The New Zealand approach relies on open ended questions to be applied in a self-assessment with a learning and improvement intention. Unable to facilitate comparison across departments, the New Zealand approach is essentially a tool for facilitated self-reflection by departments.

It can be noted that New Zealand's Performance Improvement Framework (PIF) originally served as the blueprint for the Performance Assessment Tool (PAT), a South African precursor to MPAT, although there has clearly been significant deviation in approach since, particularly around the structured, closed, defined standard approach for MPAT.

A thread in other studies emphasized the need to facilitate ownership of tools and utilization in practice to ensure adopting these tools. This reflects in an approach that prioritizes a consultative process amongst all departments and relevant stakeholders involved to ensure that there is proper buy-in that extends itself to greater lengths than just compliance. Better communication in understanding the premise of tool and its desired purpose in monitoring compliance and monitoring management of compliance are two distinct areas that assist with creating better guidelines of preparing for performance assessments and thus enabling intended users.

Political buy-in or support played a crucial role in the New Zealand. The political demand not only gives leverage for public servants but it helps with ensuring better consistency and arrangements that represent all required mandates for the tool. Although not legally institutionalised in South Africa, the MPAT has managed an amalgamated assessment tool rather consistently over three years.

The international experience, especially those of New Zealand and Canada, both point to the fact that there are long developmental processes in introducing and implementing approaches to assessing management of departments. These two both have more than a decade of experience already. It has also been learned from these experiences that it takes time to identify the correct measurements across these areas, whether in systems as part of capacity or as critical areas of management. Further, all experiences illustrate that management performance is not the end of itself in terms of producing the results but it is conceptualized as an important causal link in these approaches.

Independent reviews have confirmed that management performance assessments can make a significant contribution to improving the performance of government, if the assessment process is supported and driven by the head of the executive and if the leadership of the departments assessed take ownership of the assessment process and findings (Presidency, 2011c: 4). The aforementioned cases address the role of leadership and ownership of the

process in different ways, but it is a common thread that they are all seen as critical factors in the improvement of management performance, whether as an input, an environmental enabler or as part and parcel of a critical management area.

MPAT international comparative analysis

2.6 A Theory of Change for MPAT

2.6.1 Key concepts used in understanding the MPAT Theory of Change

Management Practice

Management practice here reflects adherence to or exemplification of management standards expected. In the case of MPAT these are largely compliance standards set by transversal departments with a regulatory responsibility for the public service. Management practice indicates the extent to which adherence to or exemplification of specified management requirements is taking place.

An example of Management Practice is 3.1.1. *Human Resource Planning: Departments comply with, and implement, the human resource planning requirements. A Human Resources plan has been developed and approved by the relevant authority.*

Management Performance

It is important to conceptualise management performance as the posited result of management practice. This describes how well the organisation performs in terms of a management KPA. Using the example above, the outcome of the management practice above will be that the human resources in the organisation are well planned for and managed. Indicators for this may be:

- % vacancies
- % vacancies more than 3 months
- Turnover / attrition rate
- An indicator of labour relations (grievances & disputes)
- Employment equity profile (race, gender, disability) to name but a few.
-

It is difficult to map the attribution relationship of each management practice to management performance (or outcomes), but this is to an extent achievable at the level of each KPA and is explored as part of the findings and analysis section.

Departmental Performance

Departmental performance (service delivery) here refers to aggregate performance of the department, mostly in terms of its mandate, strategic plans and delivery agreements.

The premise of MPAT is that improved management performance (HR management, financial management, good governance and strategic management) are key enablers for service delivery. This principle is widely assumed internationally, although it has only relatively recently begun to be tested. Attribution in this causal relationship is not only difficult to map and account for, but is also lagging in time. Nevertheless, the experiences of Canada, New Zealand and the Governance Performance Project cited earlier all go some way to reinforcing the logic of this process.

2.6.2 Core MPAT Theory of Change

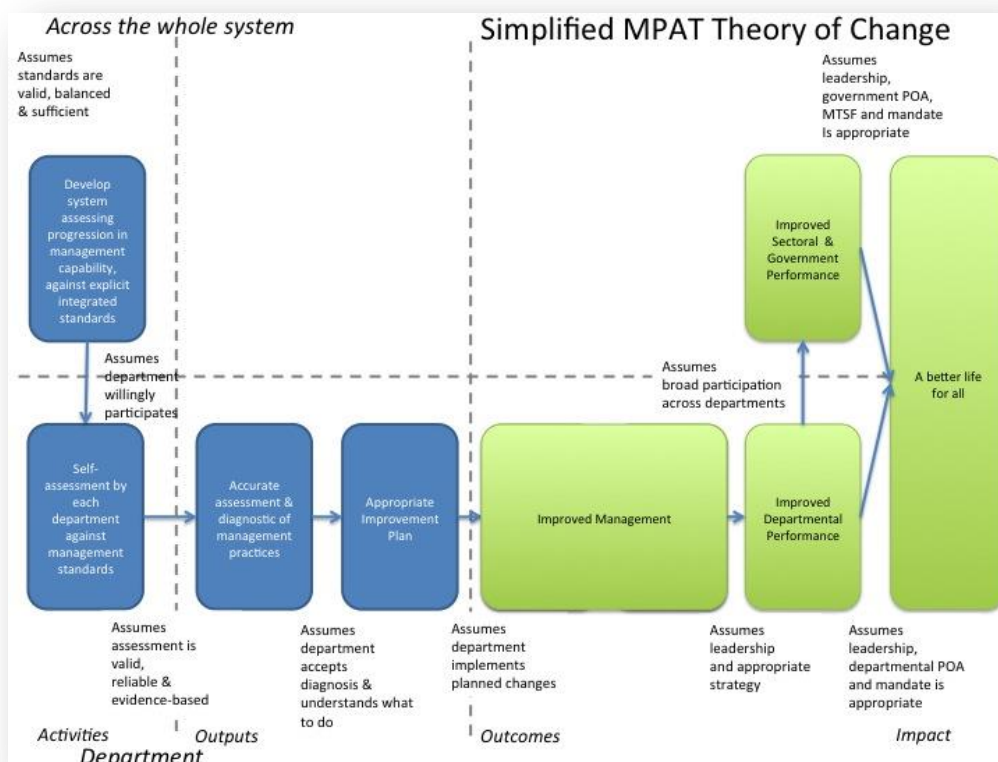


Figure 6: Simplified Theory of Change for MPAT

This section provides a narrative to how the evaluators understand the MPAT theory of change.

Develop and manage system

DPME has initiated, and developed a system in partnership with other transversal departments to assess progression in management practice, against explicit integrated standards. It is understood that these standards integrate the requirements across transversal departments regulating the public sector and that the standards reflect explicit requirements derived from legislation and regulation.

These standards form the basis of an evidence-based compliance assessment system that attempts to assess more than compliance. It is assumed that the standards are relevant and valid in that they have a proven relationship in improving management performance and service delivery.

Self-assessment by each department against management standards

Each participating department conducts a self-assessment within this system, providing evidence for their self-assessment. This assumes that they willingly participate and are adequately supported in utilising the MPAT system.

Accurate assessment and diagnostic of management practices

The self-assessment produces an accurate assessment and diagnostic of management practices within the department. It is assumed that the self-assessment is evidence-based, verifiable and produced through a process that ensures broad consensus of officials involved. It assumes that it is being conducted in a non-punitive climate conducive to dialogue, learning and improvement.

The accuracy of the assessment and diagnostic is very dependent on the validity and completeness of the standards utilized and the integrity with which the assessment has occurred.

Appropriate improvement plan

The department develops an improvement plan to address the areas for development identified in the MPAT process. The appropriateness of the improvement plan rests on the accuracy of the assessment, as well as whether the department buys into the assessment and knows what to do to respond to it. The latter is premised on the fact that it is able to learn from others and derive the necessary support to develop an improvement plan.

Improved management practice

Assuming that the Department implements its improvement plan, the Department should improve its management practice as articulated by the standards used in the assessment. The test of improved management practice will be in an improved MPAT score in the next assessment.

Improved management performance

Improved management practice results in improved management performance. The Department improves its management practices which then results in improvement in the Department's management performance. This causality is significantly premised on the standards being valid contributors to improved management performance, e.g. improved HR management will occur if all the HR management practices as described in KPA 3 are fulfilled. The validity and completeness of the standards is critical to this causal leap.

Improved departmental performance

The improvement in the Department's management performance is likely to lead to improvement in its performance as a Department. An organization that is well managed is assumed to produce good performance, provided that its strategy is appropriate and under good leadership.

Improved sectorial and government performance

By aggregation of all departments improving their performance, one expects that there will be improved performance in each sector and across government as a whole, provided there is co-ordination and this improvement process enjoys broad participation.

A better life for all

Improved government performance should result in an improvement in the quality of life of South Africans. This assumes the necessary leadership, and that departmental mandates, POA's and the Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) across government are in tune with 'A better life for all'.

2.6.3 Supportive Elements of MPAT Theory of Change

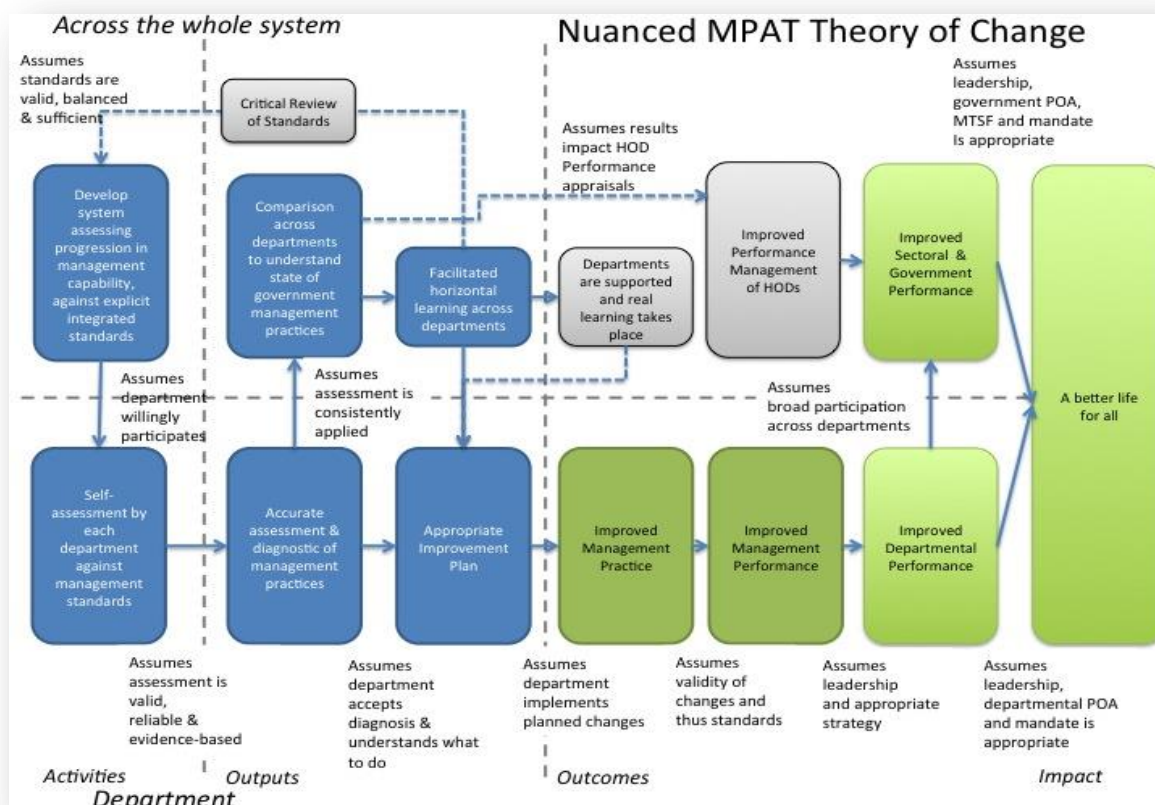


Figure 7: Nuanced Theory of Change for MPAT

The following elements, while not obvious as the core elements of the MPAT theory of change, are nonetheless critical. Not all of these elements have formed part of the explicit design of MPAT. Some elements are currently happening, whether by design or default, and can be considered implicit, but nevertheless part of MPAT's intended design.

Comparison across departments

The results of MPAT are compared across departments to illustrate comparative performance and analyse statistical trends. This comparison assumes that the self-assessment process is consistently applied across departments and is evidence-based. Moderation has been used to fulfil this function.

The results of MPAT are presented to Cabinet and then published on the DPME website. The MPAT report for each year provides some comparative results.

reresanalysis for the departments.

Horizontal learning across departments

It is intended that the comparison across departments creates the opportunity for horizontal learning. Best practices are identified for each KPA, case studies developed and published on the DPME website.

Improved performance management of HODs

It was initially intended that the MPAT scores and comparative performance would form a formal input into HOD performance appraisals and would thus increase the accuracy of HOD performance management. Arguably, this would improve management performance and government performance as a whole.

It is important to note that this is the only regulatory, or arguably, punitive component of the design.

Support & Learning

The document review shows some intention for the comparison and horizontal learning process across departments to result in an identification of departments needing support from respective transversal departments. That support being appropriately delivered and real learning taking place is possibly an outcome of the MPAT system.

Critical review of standards

The assumption that the standards are a valid and complete predictor of management performance is of paramount importance. While alignment to existing standards derived from legislation and regulation are necessary, where the validity of these is brought into question, particularly in the moderation and learning processes for each KPA, it is crucial that the standards are in continuous and critical review.

Explicit design of this corrective mechanism is essential for the assessment to remain valid and improve its validity over time.

3. Methodology

This section describes the evaluation design, the methods employed and the approach to analysis.

3.1 Evaluation design and approach

This is an implementation evaluation (with design elements) that looks at whether MPAT's operational mechanisms support the achievement of its objectives or not and seeks to understand why. It looks at the inputs, activities, outputs, and immediate outcomes expected to be achieved, as well as the use of resources and the posited causal links amongst these.

Additionally, some of the more intangible aspects of implementation, such as political support, institutional readiness for change, and the trust in management to successfully lead a change effort, are addressed. Finally, having some understanding of why the implementation effort is or is not on track gives a firm basis for initiating countermeasures, if needed (Kusek and Rist, 2004).

3.2 Analytical framework

In line with evaluation best practice, the assessment applies the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development Assistance Committee's (OECD-DAC) criteria for assessing interventions. In the context of a formative assessment structured as an implementation evaluation, this includes the criteria of relevance, efficiency and effectiveness. The additional OECD-DAC criteria of impact and sustainability are omitted from this assessment because of the formative nature of its design. These criteria are explained in more detail below.

3.2.1 Evaluation criteria

Relevance

Relevance refers to the extent to which an intervention is suited to the priorities and policies of the target group, recipients and government (OECD, 1991: 1). For the purpose of this assessment this criterion is taken to mean the extent to which MPAT is an appropriate intervention for the public service to improve management performance across national and provincial departments.

Efficiency

Efficiency measures the achievement of outputs in relation to inputs, both qualitatively and quantitatively. It refers to the use of resources (time, money, effort) in relation to the desired results, or products and services delivered (OECD, 1991: 1). For the purpose of this assessment of MPAT, this refers to

the processes through which MPAT is prepared, deployed (electronically) undertaken, signed-off, moderated, finalized and reviewed. Specifically, this criterion is applied to determine how well these processes are executed in respect of utilization of resources.

Effectiveness

Effectiveness generally refers to the extent to which an intervention has obtained its objectives (OECD, 1991: 1). In the case of MPAT effectiveness is understood as a criterion which applies at two levels: the whole of government; and at individual departmental level. It is recognized that as an implementation evaluation the efficacy of the assessment will be judged in relation to the evidence of emergent outcomes in terms of management practice and performance.

3.3 Theory of Change in relation to evaluation criteria

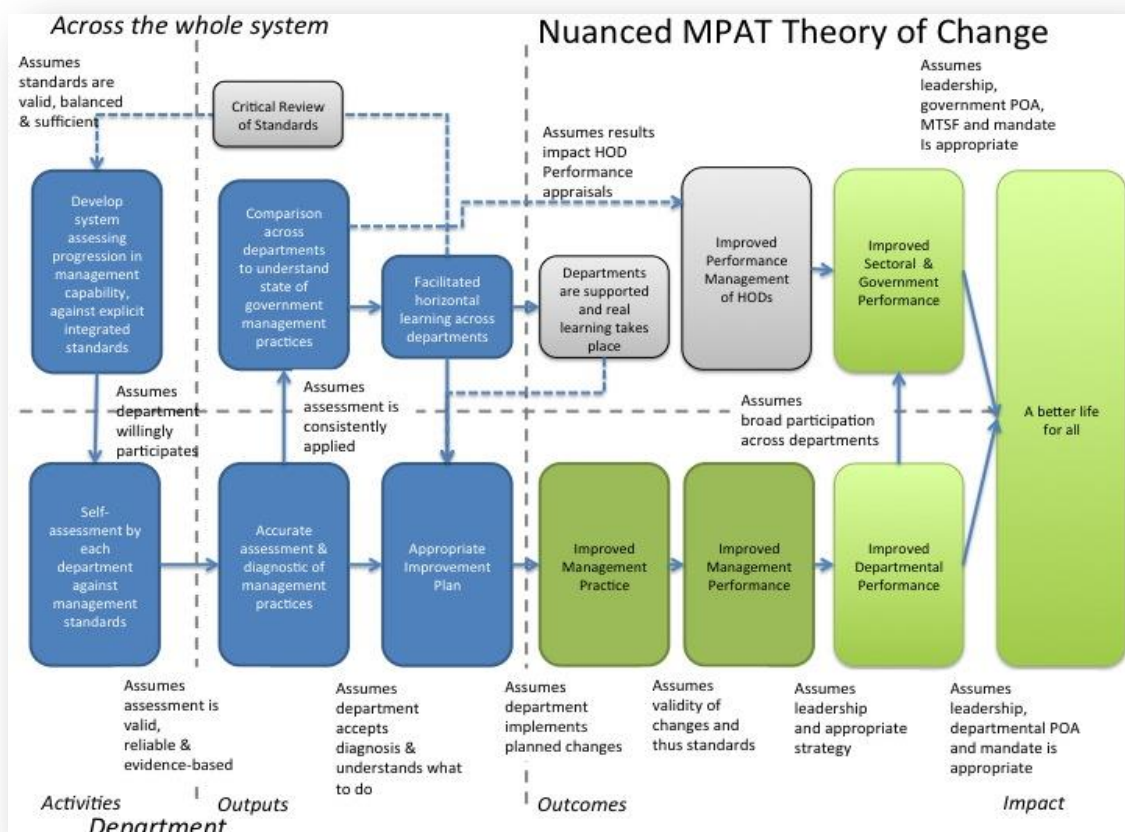


Figure 8: MPAT Theory of Change

In terms of the Theory of Change, the data utilised to provide a judgement on the criterion of relevance is collected in relation to the development of MPAT framework and tool, and those design features around which the self-assessment is applied and undertaken. This is represented in the above mainly

through the first two boxes under activities, as well as the first three assumptions: Departments willingly participate; Standards are valid, balanced and sufficient; and Assessment is valid, reliable and evidence based.

With regards to the criteria of efficiency, this criterion will be appraised based on those blocks that represent the activities undertaken from such time as self-assessments are initiated to the point of the preparation of an improvement plan at the department and system level. This is inclusive of those MPAT processes central to implementation including briefings and launch, self-assessment, internal audit and evidence compilation, moderation, challenges and finalisation.

Lastly, the effectiveness criteria will be judged based on evidence of the realisation of specific outcomes, particularly those of changes in management practice and management performance and the confirmation of the associated assumptions presented above.

Based on a synthesised judgement of the MPAT programme's design and implementation, a specific set of recommendations will then be developed as informed by the above Theory of Change, including the assumptions and role-players responsible for different parts of the above process.

3.3.1 Quantitative Data Sampling

Given that the total population of departments at national and provincial level stands at 155 departments², all of whom are led by an accounting officer accessible by electronic mail, it was decided to sample a representative of all government departments insofar as possible. Thus, sampling for the electronic questionnaire was administered to the total population of DGs or HoDs (including those in acting positions) with the intention that including the most senior ranking civil servant from every department will provide representative, high-level insight into perceptions on MPAT implementation.

² Only the Department of State Security was excluded from this sample population as it does not participate in the MPAT initiative given the unique and sensitive nature of its work. Further, a subsequent change in Cabinet has introduced other Departments that previously did not exist, such as the Department of Water and Sanitation and the Department of Women within the Presidency, these were also omitted from the sample population.

Perception Survey

A structured survey was conducted of all DGs or HoDs participating in MPAT. The questionnaire was administered by email via a web-based questionnaire on Survey Monkey comprising 11 close-ended questions and one optional open-ended question. Following a series of reminders and a window of more than three weeks for completion, 73 DGs or HoDs submitted surveys electronically. This represents a response rate of 47% for the entire population. The following table shows the distribution of the responses and their proportions against the total possible samples.

Table 1: Sample and distribution of responses by sphere of government department and province

Sphere of Government Department and Province	Total sample	Proportion of total	Response Count	Percent of sample
National Department	43	36.6%	26	60.47%
Eastern Cape	13	4.2%	3	23.08%
Free State	12	7.0%	5	41.67%
Gauteng	14	4.2%	3	21.43%
Kwazulu-Natal	14	7.0%	5	35.71%
Limpopo	12	4.2%	3	25.00%
Mpumalanga	12	8.5%	6	50.00%
Northern Cape	12	8.5%	6	50.00%
Western Cape	12	15.5%	11	91.67%
North West	11	4.2%	3	27.27%
Total	155	100.0%	71	45.81%
				0.65%
Non-response to item			1	

Considering that the average response rate for email surveys of this nature reported by online survey firm FluidSurveys (2014) sets out a 24.8% to 42.0% range, depending on the size of the sample and parameters of the survey, the above response rate can be considered good and give comfort that within the limitations of the mode, that a representative sample was obtained, with the National Departments and the Western Cape standing out in terms of their proportional representation.

3.3.2 Qualitative Data Sampling

The TOR proposed sampling that included 12 national departments and 4 departments each in 4 provinces for inclusion in the assessment, taken to be a meaningful sample of both national and provincial departments. The sample

was therefore stratified between national and provincial spheres of government before being selected based on the following purposively determined criteria:

National Departments

Criteria

Twelve National Departments were selected on the basis of:

- A diverse spread of scores in MPAT 1.3
- A diverse spread of movements between MPAT 1.2. and 1.3 scores
- Department size (staffing and budget). Very small departments and agencies have not been included.

The following national departments were included:

- ND Trade & Industry
- ND Science and Technology
- ND Basic Education
- ND Higher Education and Training (in place of Health)
- ND Police
- ND Home Affairs
- National Treasury
- ND Cooperative Governance
- ND Public Service & Administration
- ND Public Enterprises
- ND International Relations & Cooperation
- ND Public Works

Provinces

Criteria

The following criteria were used in the selection of provinces:

- A spread of MPAT scores in 1.3
- Movements in MPAT scores between 1.2 and 1.3
- Travel and access considerations

Sampled provinces

The terms of reference suggested that the sample include provincial departments from:

- the North West,
- Limpopo,
- Free State and

- the Western Cape.

These correspond to the two best performers and two worst performers in MPAT 1.3. However, given considerations of resources and time, Gauteng was substituted for North West as the province is also unique in terms of its urban composition and provides insights into a province with mid-range historical MPAT performance.

Provincial Departments

Four departments were sampled in each province. For the basis of comparison between provinces the same or functionally equivalent departments were sampled across each of the provinces. Departments were selected on the basis of the transversal coordinating department in the Province (Office of the Premier), a department with concurrent powers and functions between national and provincial spheres (Education), a department with key infrastructural management responsibilities as guided by the literature review (Public Works), as well as the best performing department common across provinces (Agriculture). Thus, the departments included in the sample across four provinces were:

- Office of the Premier
- Department of Public Works
- Department of Basic Education
- Department of Agriculture

3.3.3 Pilot of data collection instruments

A pilot of data collection instruments occurred in the Western Cape allowing for refinements and improvements, particularly the semi-structured interview guideline and focus group tool. Various iterations of the survey questionnaire were tested internally before making final changes to the formulation of questions.

3.3.4 Qualitative Data Collection

Qualitative data collection took two distinct forms: Semi-structured interviews with individuals and focus groups with groups of respondents (6-8 on average). For each method different question guidelines were prepared, customised and refined (following piloting) to the respective purposes and targets of the respective data collection.

Focus groups were targeted at line managers and those staff responsible for facilitating performance within the respective provinces and national departments. This accounted for 32 of all focus groups conducted. An additional

two focus groups targeting moderators of the MPAT process occurred during the moderation week event in the Drakensberg, where one focus group was conducted with partners representing the transversal departments that have a stake in MPAT's success. In total, 35 focus groups were conducted (20 provincially and 15 nationally) including 265 individuals.

A total of 51 semi-structured interviews were conducted including 57 individuals (34 individuals at provincial level and 23 individuals at national level). Within this sample of respondents, 22 DGs or HODs were interviewed, while 35 individuals acting as MPAT coordinators for a department were interviewed.

3.4 Secondary Data

Secondary data compilation entailed examining data drawn over the three year period of MPAT implementation (1.1-1.3). This was inclusive of additional research and analyses of secondary data to capitalise on the extensive work and analysis of MPAT results already undertaken by DPME and the University of Witwatersrand (Wits) amongst others. Where possible and relevant in relation to the programme theory, other indicators of management performance collected by the DPSA, National Treasury and other departments available at a government-wide level were considered in relation to the four management performance areas.

Each of the respective types of data were analysed independently before being synthesised and integrated into the findings and analysis section that follows.

In the case of the primary quantitative data, the sampling approach and available data lent itself to the use of descriptive statistics as disaggregated at the national and provincial levels as appropriate.

Qualitative data analysis occurred distinctly for each of the four respective provinces (inclusive of the four comprising departments) and at the national level. Thus, five parallel qualitative data analysis processes occurred simultaneously. Each of these analyses followed the process of identification of the 4-6 most salient points emerging from each interview or focus group, before then scrutinising notes and recordings to undertake thematic coding of quotations to the key issues or concepts as set out in relation to the programme theory and overarching criteria.

Working papers comprising the findings emerging from each of the four provinces and one for all participating national departments were then developed. Each paper presented data as thematically structured and provided preliminary analysis of all of the qualitative data generated from each of the 5 strands.

The evaluation report represents the synthesis and integration of the qualitative data and preliminary analysis captured in the five working papers from the 35 focus groups and 51 interviews combined with the quantitative data analysis to enrich, deepen and cross-reference findings. This data is further triangulated with the secondary data analyses which speak primarily to issues of effectiveness and intended results, including correlation analysis of MPAT results in relation to other measures of management performance and outcomes.

3.5 Ethical considerations

To obtain an informed and representative sample this entailed engaging with accounting officers at the most senior levels of government (DGs and HoDs) down to senior management and line managers within the respective departments. Considerations were given as to the potential risks associated with candid reflection by staff at various levels and in the context of the work of superiors and reporting staff.

Standard ethical protocols were followed for all individuals participating in the assessment. This included sharing a statement of informed consent, delivered to participants and signed by each acknowledging his or her participation and the implications of participating in this research. Further, contact information of the evaluators and an evaluation brief were provided to all respondents and signatures of informed consent for all qualitative data obtained, whether via individual interviews or via focus groups. An example of informed consent statement and agreement are provided as an appendix to this report.

Randomized ordering and assignment of arbitrary numbers to the respective respondents and focus groups has introduced a reasonable degree of anonymity amongst the respondents. Further, references to focus group numbers, rather than individuals within focus groups, introduces another layer of anonymity for respondents within those groups, while still allowing the researchers to identify the context in which certain qualitative statements were made.

Lastly, in the interest of transparency and full disclosure, it should be noted that members of the evaluation team were consultants hired at one stage in the design of the intervention. This potential conflict of interest has been declared from the outset and deemed acceptable by the client given the limited collaborative role of the consultants at the time, subsequent iterations and development of the intervention and all efforts to acknowledge, mitigate and minimise any potential bias. Further, existing knowledge of the intervention also brings in some additional understanding and insight into the dynamics between stakeholders.

3.6 Limitations of the evaluation

The evaluation had some limitations which, while less than ideal, have not resulted in significant deviations from the intentions of the assignment.

Given that the electronic survey population included 155 accounting officers, a response from 73 or 47% is not ideal, although certainly of a more than adequate standard giving electronic survey benchmarks. Despite inclusion of the entire population giving an equal opportunity to all respondents, there is the possibility of non-response bias. It is acknowledged that although there is confidence in the representativity of the survey participants, there are limitations to this data which may be borne of an otherwise unknown and unintentional respondent bias or self-selection bias, although it is the position of the evaluators that this is unlikely.

Further to the quantitative data, because of time and efficiency considerations one short survey was distributed that sought to be able to disaggregate data at provincial and national level although recognising that the survey tool would not allow for the sufficient modalities to customise questions depending on the perspective. As such, some questions were packaged expecting respondents to comprehend and apply the question in relation to their respective context, given the seniority of the respondents. Although less than ideal, it was a pragmatic decision not without limitations as it pertains to comprehension and judgment of attitudinal survey questions.

In terms of the qualitative data, participation of the Department of Health was inadequate and this led to the substitution of the Department of Higher Education in the sample instead. Furthermore, availability and scheduling difficulties meant that securing time with accounting officers (DGs and HoDs) was a challenge, as in the case of four national departments where interviews did not occur. Furthermore, because of the variation across departments whereby some accounting officers concentrated more responsibility in their staff appointed to deal with MPAT, there were instances where officers opted to have other staff present in their interviews, thus introducing a potential bias and possibility masking candid reflections and insights in favour of a common departmental position. The approach of the interviewers was to be permissive in this regard in favour of creating the conditions for the interviews to maximize the available data and insights given the varying preferences, confidence and experience in dealing directly with the MPAT process.

Additional limitations in terms of the data collection and analysis process were agreed during the inception phase. These limitations included that the qualitative data would not be subjected to full transcription, coding and analysis, but would be collected and analysed within a flexible framework that allowed for

the noting of key issues and the thematic notation and identification of key quotes, rather than the systematic analysis of all transcribed qualitative data. While less than ideal methodologically, this was more apt for the time and resource availability and because this data is cross-referenced with other sources to effectively mitigate the likelihood of overlooking any key issues.

Lastly, one of the final limitations had to do with the availability and comparability of data from the MPAT 1.1 process. The first implementation process prompted alterations to the design and implementation of MPAT in later iterations. As such, the results from the first year of MPAT 1.1 are not considered an appropriate dataset for comparison because of the extent of the changes between versions and the differences in the participation of departments between version 1.1 (partial) versus versions 1.2 and 1.3 (total).

4. Findings and analysis

This section presents the key findings and analysis of data which has been independently analysed before being synthesised and integrated here under the overarching criteria for assessment.

4.1 Relevance

This criterion is taken to mean the extent to which MPAT is an appropriate intervention for the public service to improve management practice across national and provincial departments. Data collected has been structured in relation to a number of sub-criteria on relevance.

4.1.1 Undertaking self-assessment

Against the backdrop of the absence of the regular assessment of management practice within the existing performance M&E systems of government, respondents indicated there is value in a process that allows for assessment of management practice as it contributes to management performance. Respondents distinguished between the value of the assessment as it pertains to management practice, and the value of the self-assessment approach in general. The following explains the value in relation to management practice:

“MPAT is assessing management practices, not individual management performance. Improving management practices will improve management performance, management practices are not a one man show.” (Interview 3)

“MPAT is the dipstick that tells you where you are [with regard to management practice].” (Focus Group 8)

“It helps the department know where they are and where they need to go to improve.” (Focus Group 16)

“[MPAT] gives you more realistic sense on how the organisation is running and [those issues that] cut across key areas.” (Focus Group 11)

However, while acknowledging the value of the MPAT process, one respondent was keen to identify the limitations of what MPAT can and cannot do:

“....it can assess the compliance based aspect but not assess the actual sense of management performance”. (Interview 14)

“It is still measuring inputs and outputs, not measuring outcomes at all levels. Is there a correlation between MPAT performance and outcome performance?” (Interview 14)

While the above highlights the perspective that there are limitations to MPAT and raises the question of whether the programme theory is in fact valid (part of the purpose of this assessment), other respondents emphasised the worth of the self-assessment approach more generally. The process of self-assessment itself also has intrinsic value as demonstrated in the following quotes:

“This is more of introspection, of asking am I doing things right and is it according to the legislative requirements. Then you can realign yourself accordingly” (Interview 11).

“It is a very good thing. You can see where you are. You think you are doing a stunning job and then you see the self-assessment and you adjust. It’s a wakeup call to tell you where you are.” (Focus Group 11)

“There is value in self-assessment and it is a good principle”. (Interview 14)

“Opportunity for communication around the self-assessment, start recognising our own shortcomings and our own lacks in certain things.” (Focus Group 12)

“Doing introspection and living [up] to expectations of what is happening in the department and how we can improve where there are issues... brings fairness to the process... assess yourself before someone else does”. (Focus Group 14)

“You are able to defend your score and why you feel you deserve a score... [there is] ownership that we as a department are given as those who run the process.” (Focus Group 4)

Considering there were not any specific critiques of self-assessment as an approach or challenges as to the rationale for MPAT itself, only indications of its limitations. Respondents were agreed that undertaking a self-assessment of management practices is a worthwhile exercise, although the exact process, formulation and procedures involved were subject to an array of perspectives.

4.1.2 KPAs and Standards

What the self-assessment reveals about management practice is largely determined by the design and formulation of the KPAs and standards. Thus, the extent to which the KPAs and standards are appropriate for management practice so that it leads to management performance is critical.

93.2% of accounting officers (e.g. DGs and HoDs) agreed that the KPAs are appropriate.

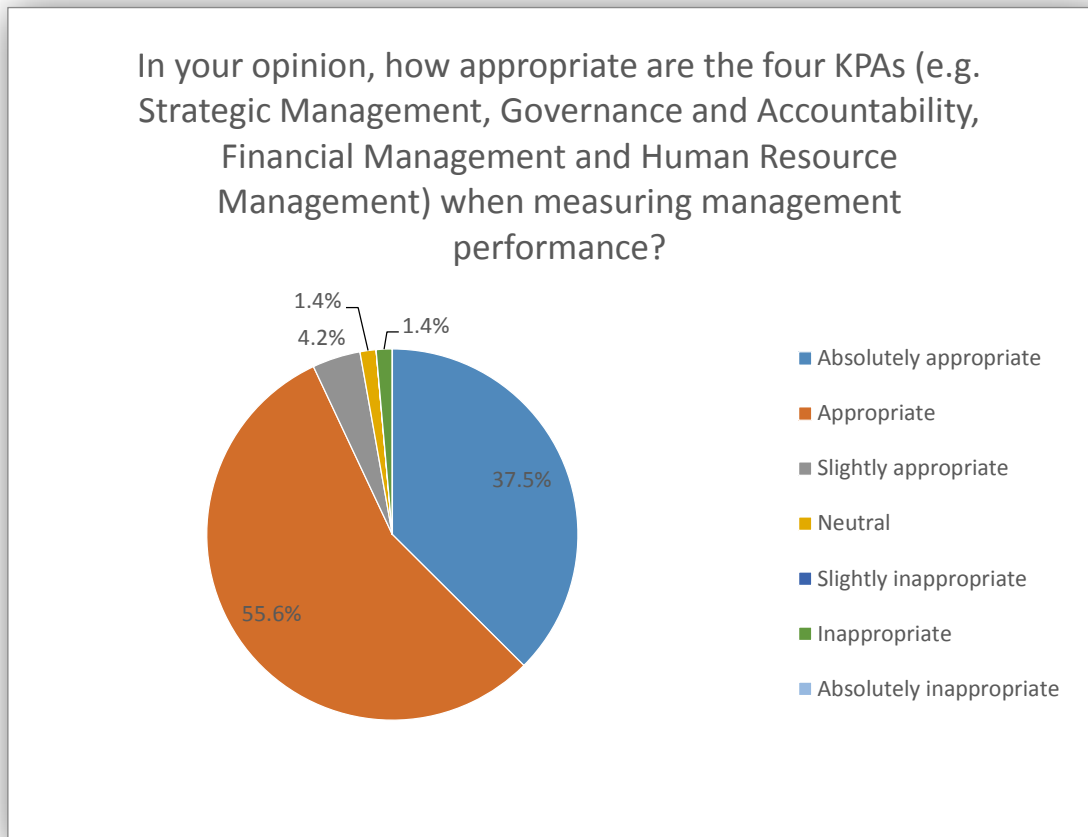


Figure 9: Appropriateness of the four KPAs

55.6% of the respondents felt that the standards were appropriate, whilst 37.5% found the KPAs to be absolutely appropriate, meaning 93.1% of all accounting officers that participated in the survey believed they were appropriate or better. Although there were some respondents who felt that the KPAs were slightly inappropriate or inappropriate, this amounted to less than 3% of all respondents.

While at the level of the accounting officer there was broad support for the KPAs in relation to management practice, there were opposing opinions, particularly some critiques that the MPAT KPAs place too much of a focus on compliance and are not addressing the expected outcomes of good management performance:

“If you go look nicely, those KPAs are all management issues, measuring soft issues within an organisation. Your genuine service delivery issues aren’t there. Are you putting infrastructure there? Are citizens getting medicines? If the intention of MPAT is to look broadly across government then those should be included” (Interview 24).

“You can do well on MPAT and not get a clean audit. People see it as a competition, people put a whole lot of capacity into competition and then external audit still says you are not getting things right.” (Interview 44)

“What are we actually measuring? I get a [sense] it is what they are battling with at national, they keep on changing it. Even at version 4 we are not comparing apples to apples on a year to year basis.” (Interview 44)

Within another focus group (Focus Group 30) another respondent argued that for the KPAs to be absolutely appropriate, they have to address more than compliance. At the moment they are measuring compliance to the prescribed norm of management practice.

While there is general consensus around the appropriateness of the KPAs, in setting out the four overarching assessment areas of management performance, when one drills down to the level of standards, some issues begin to arise.

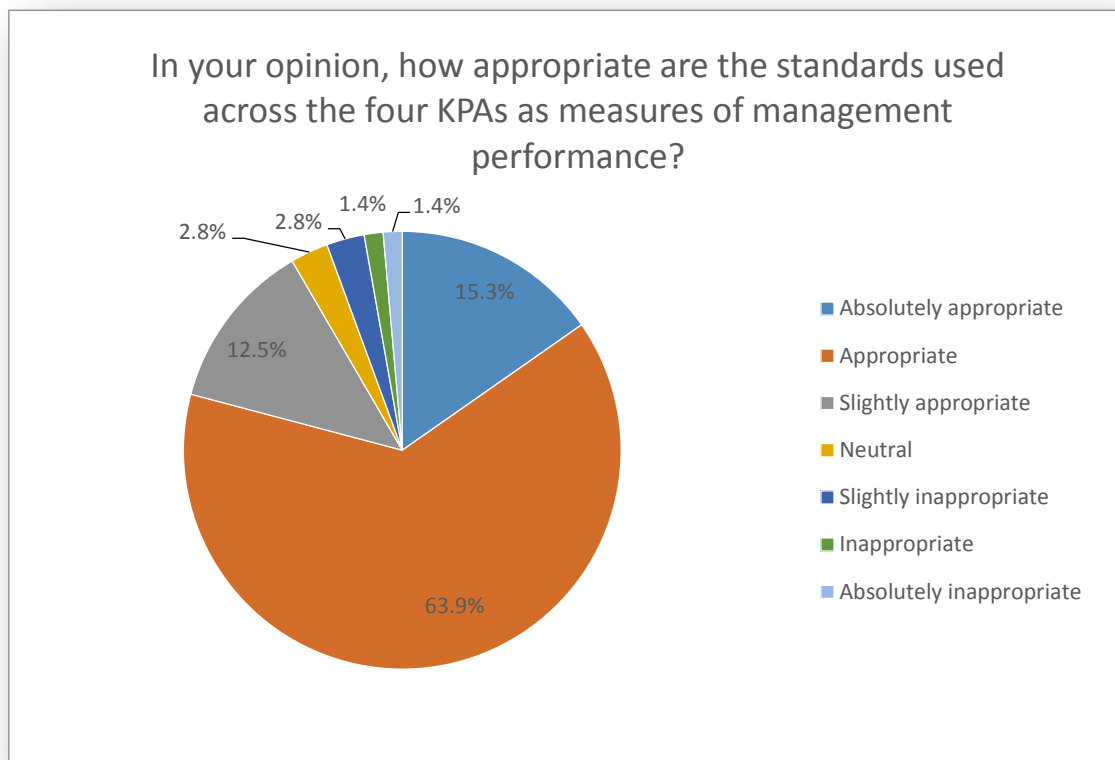


Figure 10: Appropriateness of the standards

Figure 10 shows that 12.5% of respondents felt the standards were slightly appropriate; 64.4% of respondents felt that the standards were appropriate; and, 15.1% felt that they were absolutely appropriate. Although only 5.6% felt the standards were in some way inappropriate, there is a clear shift in the

certainty of the accounting officers that standards within the KPAs are in fact measuring the right things.

To better understand this, data from interviews and focus groups provides some useful insights. These have been differentiated by KPAs.

General comments on the KPAs

Despite emergent indications from the literature review, asset management and IT were not generally noted as omissions by respondents. However, in one province focus group respondents indicated that asset management warrants a separate KPA (Focus Group 2). In three other instances different departmental respondents motivated for an increased focus on asset management, whether through more standards, as a sub-performance area or through a dedicated KPA. When considered against the international best practice identified in Canada (TBCS, 2014), New Zealand (State Services Commission, 2014) or the United States (GPP, 2005; 2008) the importance of this omission is recognised. Currently KPA 4- Financial Management does have a standard related to Disposal Management, but this would seem inadequate for such a critical element of departmental performance and as a cost driver.

Another comment that was raised by respondents was that it is inappropriate when MPAT is used for comparison between departments of a certain size and service delivery mandate (e.g. departments of education, health, social development, etc) versus comparably smaller departments with different purposes (e.g. departments of safety and liaison, local government, Office of the Premier, etc).

“It’s evident that the bigger departments do some of their work differently to those in smaller departments” (Focus Group 2).

“[I]t becomes difficult using a generic tool across departments to measure progress. How does the tool accommodate nuances?” (Focus Group 1)

This point is reinforced when one considers the experience of two provinces with a shared corporate services model as well.

4-point rating scale

Some respondents have found the 4-point rating scale straightforward and appropriate indicating that it is simple because alternatives mean that *“the longer the list the more grey the areas”* (Interview 38). However, one respondent of the extreme view found this to be absolutely inappropriate as it does not capture marginal differences between the levels 1 – 4 (Interview 27). Another respondent echoed this saying that the rating arrangement is punitive –

“this is a sore point, we get a 2 for strategic management and we have all the attributes but we fail on one point” (Interview 43).

A point of concern raised by multiple respondents is that level 4 is “*blurry*” and needs to be more distinct from level 3. Another respondent also expressed confusion about the rating, *“the scale is appropriate but sometimes it is not clear how to get 3 or a 4, some clarification [is] needed” (Interview 50).*

The following are some of the quotes that address the ambiguity related to Level 4:

“It is not clear for a lot of departments what is level 4 and what is not. There is a little bit of interpretation that goes here.” (Focus Group 7)

“There is a discrepancy across awarding a score of 3 and 4, and more clarity is sought in this regard” (Focus Group 25).

While there were requests for some clarity on level 4, another indicated that MPAT lends itself to on-going performance improvement and development because *“...progressively the system will outgrow the standards, and will need to create a higher order of standards” (Interview 13).*

KPA 1- Strategic Management

Issues raised with KPA 1 standards tended to question the value of process compliance. One respondent noted that *“I can follow all the processes of a strategic process but that doesn’t mean I have a good strategic plan” (Interview 6).* Another group of respondents highlighted the narrow interpretation of a standard that they had already surpassed.

“Standard 1.3.1 requires you have a content note that states you have an intention to do an evaluation. The standard is so low. We won’t lower our standards” (Focus Group 2).

The participant implied that the department may need to regress to satisfy the MPAT criteria because of the strict interpretation of level ratings since they are already doing evaluations, but do not necessarily have content notes stating the intention to do so.

A broader point that was raised, whether directly or implicitly, noted that KPA 1 specifically stopped short of actually demonstrating that strategic management was causing anything of consequence to happen better. While this may be particularly difficult to provide for given the generic nature of the tool and the diverse functions and mandates of all the departments, calls for evidence of the effectiveness of strategic management were stated in relation to KPA 1 specifically. The following quotes sum this perspective up:

“Having a strategy or policy in place doesn’t measure implementation. Need to put in an area of project implementation.” (Focus Group 6)

“I can follow all the processes of a strategic process but that doesn’t mean I have a good strategic plan” (Interview 6)

“We can use plans for years, but can we implement them?” (Focus Group 30)

“KPA 1 needs to be developed to move from the compliance aspect to move to a more evaluation approach to KPA 1.” (Focus Group 30)

The above highlights the gap between management practice, management performance and departmental performance, whereby the tracking of strategic management practices is being questioned in terms of its ultimate efficacy, something addressed in a later criterion.

Another perspective reflected that some of the standards included under KPA 1 may be better aligned elsewhere. The following quote describes this:

“Some of these may need to be split – some of these should shift into governance. Latter standards of this area speak to KPA2 – need to speak to the definitions of the KPAs so that these properly work and describe the right alignment – better categorisation is needed” (Interview 13).

KPA 2- Governance and Accountability

Perspectives on KPA 2 and its comprising standards varied and were challenged by the spread of practices it sought to track. The following quotes explain:

“KPA 2 is a very broad and diverse KPA, it is difficult for a single KPA coordinator to manage. It may be useful to split governance and accountability.” (Focus Group 8)

“[V]ery awkward one, hobbled together with different aspects and that creates difficulty. Where delegations sit on one hand and public sector issues and then corruption, ethics and fraud what are you then looking for? This doesn’t really gel with existing structures.” (Interview 14)

“Some standards in the KPA refer to delegations which are sent elsewhere in the province, particularly to the Corporate Service Centre. The Corporate Services Centre covers indicators related to ICT, enterprise management, legal services and PAIA. MPAT standards do not make

provision for the Province's own situation, such as the corporatized services." (Focus Group 3)

"Standard 2.4.1 addressing financial disclosures is problematic at Level 3+. If we don't have access to CIPC how do we do that? You would not be able to verify. There is no link between the analysis and being able to verify. How do you do it?" (Focus Group 30)

The above also resonated with a perspective put forth by one respondent that some of the KPA 1 standards were in fact better place in KPA 2 (Interview 13).

Another issue that was raised was the expectation that certain standards would be met by specific dates as it was a source of frustration in some instances. The following explains:

"You don't need to change your delegations on an annual basis and you don't have to do it by a particular date." (Focus Group 30)

KPA 3- Human Resources Management

Within this KPA there were some concerns identified by respondents:

"KPA 3 is a bit harsh with sticking to the deadlines...you might miss the deadline and yet you actually have the policy or report." (Interview 6)

"...appointment of 50% SMS women and 2% disabled appointments. I don't have any control over that. I am being scored against that. If people don't apply what can you do? Internships, you take graduates from the university, you take from what is available? There are some things which are beyond our control. These are formulated without taking the reality on the ground into account." (Interview 24)

However, this KPA was also credited with providing important indications of deficiencies in one province.

"This is the area of the poorest compliance of all in our province, it's a train smash." (Interview 14)

"HRM is the prime resource which is lacking in [our] province. It is in disarray and requires a dedicated turnaround." (Interview 34)

The following sums up how this particular KPA was understood as contributing in one province:

"MPAT is credited with unearthing the weakness in the HRM system province wide." (Interview 14)

KPA 4- Financial Management

Comments on this KPA indicated some respondents' concerns with work done for the Auditor-General (AG), highlighting the similarities and differences between the two. One respondent (Interview 34) suggested that the financial KPA *"isn't as detailed as the AG equivalent, but gives a dipstick of where the department is and where the department wants to be."* However, another concern was raised with regards to some of the measures themselves within this KPA:

"There is inconsistency across measures, sometimes you need a yes or no at level 2 and then you need a 2 to get to a 3. For standard 4.2.4 to be a 2 you need a documented policy or process. To be a 3 you need to have an investigation report. We don't have unauthorised or fruitless expenditure so we don't have the investigation report and the related documents. We cannot be a 3 if we are missing one of these. If I have a 0 for fruitless and unauthorised expenditure, so none of this kind of expenditure, then we won't have a 3. The standard assumes that you have unauthorised and fruitless expenditure." (Focus Group 10)

The above highlights the unintended consequence of the level phrasing combined with the evidence required, seemingly rewarding an undesirable outcome. Some of the other comments relate to the scope and how well the KPA reflects standards beyond the scope of MPAT:

"The problem here is that this is truncated, I know that NT does the maturity model. This KPA isn't looking at financial management. Have you aligned your budget to your priorities is outdated. It has nothing to do with outcomes-based budgeting." (Interview 14)

"DPME is not up to date with new developments in Treasury Regulations." (Focus Group 30)

The issue of the involvement and synergy with partner departments is another matter addressed under the criteria of efficiency below.

4.1.3 Reasons for undertaking MPAT

In response to the survey question, "Which statement best describes why the department undertakes MPAT?", the majority (87.1%) of respondents expressed that "MPAT is a meaningful opportunity for departmental learning and improvement" as the most appropriate response. This was followed by 8.6% of respondents who indicated that the department undertakes MPAT because it "appears in performance agreements and statutory plans", while even fewer respondents (4.3%) indicated they undertake MPAT because the political executive officer instructs them to. No DGs or HoDs indicated that they

undertake MPAT solely because other departments do. The following figure illustrates these findings.

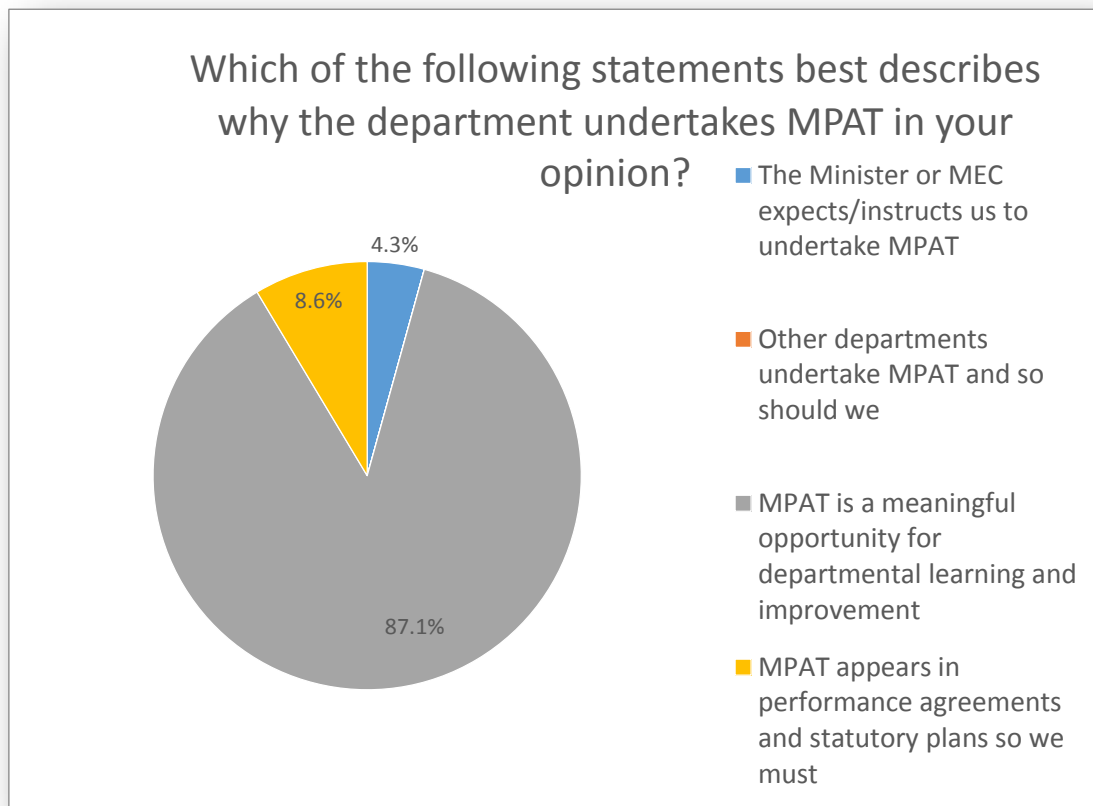


Figure 11: Why do you undertake MPAT?

From the above, it would seem clear that the majority of accounting officers believe MPAT's purpose rests in its potential for learning and improvement more than other considerations of compliance or observation of political directive. This point is particularly relevant to the following sub-section on participation rates.

4.1.4 Participation rates

There are not any legislative prescriptions requiring that departments participate in the programme. As such, participation is at the discretion of the political representatives of the respective departments based on the decision of Cabinet, which has made participation in MPAT government policy. However, by making it a policy position instead of a legislated one, the decision keeps with the intention of the self-assessment design element, meant to build ownership and buy-in to the process so as to avoid a malicious compliance approach. This has been set out in the background and literature review.

It is for the above reason that participation rates are but one useful indication of the relevance of this process over time, both for what participation tells us about the relevance of the process and what the rates may reveal about the voluntary nature of participation.

Table 2: MPAT participation rates over time 1.1-1.3

<i>Version</i>	<i>Participating departments</i>	<i>Total departments</i>	<i>Participation rate</i>
1.1 (2011/12)	103	158	65.19%
1.2 (2012/13)	156	156	100%
1.3 (2013/14)	155	155	100%

From the above it is clear that from the outset there was widespread commitment to participating in MPAT and that over the last two cycles this has led to full participation as per Cabinet's policy directive. Even in the Western Cape where an opposition party governs provincially, thus adding to the potential for policy dissonance between spheres, participation rates have been 100% over the last two cycles. This suggests considerable buy-in to the process which would appear consistent with the indication provided that MPAT is believed to serve a learning and improvement purpose.

However, another possible interpretation of the data is that 100% participation may be indicative of an initiative that has become *de facto* a compliance exercise, where for fear of rebuke or reasonable expectation of repercussion for non-participation, all parties participate. Although this is a possibility, there would seem to be little alternative data to support such an interpretation. Although such an extreme participation rate is noted as potentially indicative of a more subtle pressure and expectation, there is little evidence to support this interpretation at this time since MPAT has been described by the majority of accounting officers as meeting the purpose of learning and development.

4.1.5 Other tools and related processes

MPAT was also discussed in relation to some of the other existing tools and processes for which there are some overlaps. In particular, the other tools and related processes identified included:

- DPSA's Organisational Functionality Assessment
- The Auditor-General's Annual Audits (including Pre-Determined Objectives)
- Financial Management Capability Maturity Model of National Treasury (now dormant)
(Focus Group 18)

National Treasury's Office of the Accountant General has been implementing a Financial Management Capability Maturity Model over the last decade. It is a compliance assessment with over more than 500 indicators of accounting practice. Initially, this information was used to complement the MPAT assessment, but this tool has not been consistently utilised over recent years. Furthermore it provides a weighty and detailed compliance assessment of accounting practice.

The DPSA Organisational Functional Assessment (OFSA) Tool was introduced to aid recovery plan diagnostics, and is evidenced to be used in intervention contexts (Focus Group 18). Its documentation says that the assessment involves the systemic analysis of organisational functionality measured against the capacity of a department to deliver. It focuses on resource utilisation and deployment and checks whether all the required institutionalised systems, policies and processes in support of service delivery are in place. It appears that this largely draws on secondary data from PERSAL and complements it with data from the AG audits.

While all of these other tools or processes occur in response to specific legislative mandates, they also happen to have a more narrow focus than MPAT itself. However, that did prompt some respondents to indicate concerns over duplication: It was asked why it is necessary that we have to complete both? One focus group indicated that the boundaries between DPME and DPSA were blurry in this regard while the two processes doubled the reporting burden (Focus Group 30). Another perspective was that there is misalignment between the AG's focus and MPAT where the AG is looking to establish that the department is spending money for the right reason (Focus Group 1). Another perspective took this further, *"MPAT needs to use AGSA findings more. If AGSA doesn't have an issue with ghost employees then why does MPAT? There is a lot of auditing going on at the moment and they remain unrelated. It is important that there is greater integration with the auditing and regulatory frameworks that already exist"* (Focus Group 30).

Another point raised was that the thorough application and vetting of evidence for every standard for every department in MPAT is unique in terms of an assessment process (Focus Group 20). In the case of the AG findings, only a sample of specific programmes, usually the cost drivers, are sampled for the audit, and thus findings are extrapolated and inferred across the whole department. In the case of MPAT, the scope of the standards is more manageable and taken as the most appropriate indications of management practice. Further, in both instances MPAT and the AG results were identified as positive drivers of change (Focus Group 9).

A focus group indicated that what distinguishes MPAT from these other tools is the manner in which DPME is combining the information across KPAs into a more meaningful assessment process, which by publishing, introduces an

accountability element that was previously lacking (Focus Group 18). These published results are addressed more under the effectiveness criterion. There are clearly other tools and processes for which there is duplication and overlap with the MPAT process; however, none would appear to have the degree of political support, scope or recognition of MPAT.

4.1.6 Synthesis

The above findings and analysis present a picture of MPAT that is positive in broad terms as it pertains to the relevance of the intervention. The self-assessment and design, especially when compared with alternative tools, are all clearly acknowledged as valuable elements of the intervention. Further, historical participation rates (MPAT 1.1-65.2%; MPAT 1.2&1.3- 100.0%) and reasons for participating in MPAT all appear to be indications of the value of this initiative in relation to the challenges of public management practice across the state. There is a clear case for stating that the learning and improvement intentions of the tool are something that has been widely embraced and recognised, as well as its unique self-assessment approach. The breadth of management practice issues that it covers along with the level of support it receives at the highest level of the state distinguishes the initiative from others, albeit with some overlaps and important relationships.

However, going into more detail on the sub-criteria illustrates that there are some concerns around the composition of KPAs and the formulation of standards specifically. Considering the 33 current standards, there appeared to be comparatively few that are specifically identified as problematic, but it was clear that there were some concerns with the composition of KPA 1 and 2 respectively, where the line distinguishing these became blurry for some respondents. When considered against the omission of asset management and to a lesser extent, IT standards, it is also clear that there are some gaps in the design, particularly as it pertains to best practice. Questions over differentiating between departments also arise between departments with comparatively different sizes, mandates and budgets, as well as those with shared services responsibilities. Furthermore, the issue of achieving a Level 4 rating was another area where respondents raised concern and indicated that the tool may not actually be demonstrating excellence, especially when one considers the limitation of what it can measure in relation to management practice.

4.2 Efficiency

Efficiency refers to the achievement of outputs in relation to inputs and the associated processes through which MPAT is prepared, undertaken, signed-off, moderated, finalised and reviewed. Specifically, this criterion is applied to

determine how well these processes are executed in respect of the resources of time and expertise in particular.

4.2.1 MPAT tools and resources

The entry point for undertaking MPAT begins with the tools and resources available in undertaking the assessment process. This is understood as being inclusive of the guidelines, web-based system, technologies, and more. Satisfaction levels with the tools and resources associated with MPAT were generally high (ranging from 14.1% that are very satisfied to 63.4% that are satisfied). However, there was a portion of respondents that indicated dissatisfaction (11.3%), and an extreme minority were very dissatisfied (1.4%).

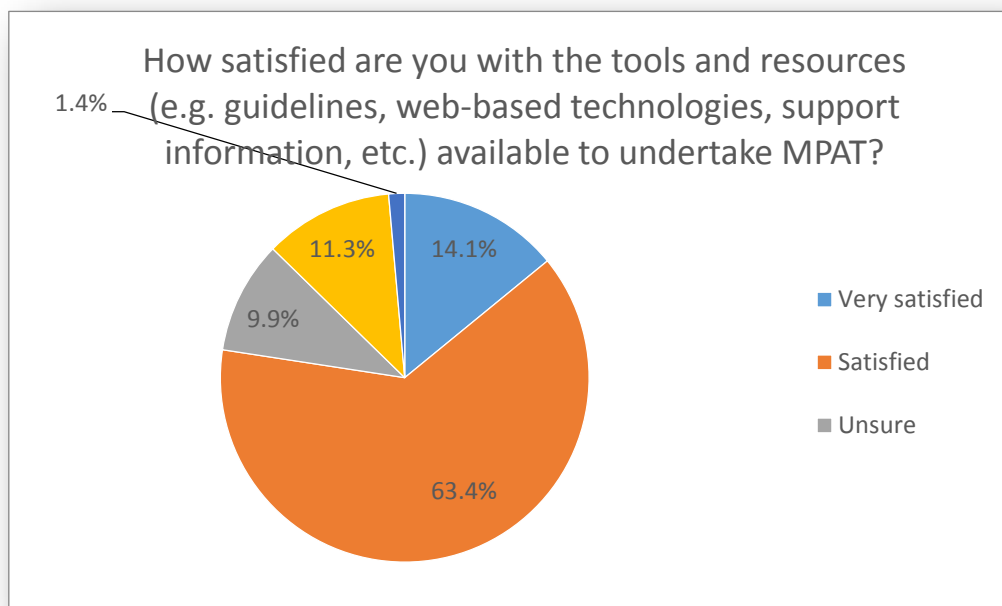


Figure 12: Satisfaction with tools and resources

When asked about tools and resources in interviews and focus groups, respondents tended to focus on the website facility as opposed to guideline documentation and related information products. Some respondents acknowledged that there was consistency in the approach to uploading documents between MPAT 1.2 and 1.3 (Focus Group 6) and that there were improvements and recognition that a paperless system is itself an accomplishment (Focus Group 7). But despite these acknowledgements, comments expressing concern over the online system were widespread. The most common refrain focussed on challenges in uploading documents:

“...uploading of documents on the system is very slow. This year, the system was even slower than last time. We thought that it would have

gotten better. We uploaded in the middle of the night and early in the morning. (Focus Group 23)

"[The] web based system doesn't work. It is a nightmare and every year it comes with new challenges. Loading of evidence is a pain for me. Documents like annual reports are in colour and big in size and at times you can't upload it and then it comes back after being moderated that the document hasn't been uploaded." (Interview 26)

"it is frustrating where we gear the province up and then we can't upload because of system problems. [It's] difficult because people are motivated and then can't do it and then hit a slump and have to be motivated again." (Focus Group 26)

"We uploaded several times and information got lost." (Focus Group 15)

"If the technical issues, such as log-in details and the system being active when it is said to be are not resolved in time, this undermines people's confidence and you feel like you are being set up to fail." (Focus Group 22)

"Although the electronic / web-based MPAT system is a good system, the electronic MPAT system issues e.g. access, save, submit and sign-off functionalities should be addressed. During MPAT 1.4 each KPA Coordinator etc. struggled to gain access to the MPAT system, and to upload documents / evidence and capture the self-assessment scores on the MPAT system. Activities / capturing of self-assessment scores had to be repeated several times before it was reflected / saved on the MPAT system. Furthermore, at each level of submission and sign-off, the MPAT system caused problems e.g. for KPA Coordinators, Internal Auditor, MPAT Coordinator and the final sign-off by the DG. The DPME staff members were always willing to assist and very helpful." (Survey respondent 1)

The extent of challenges and issues with uploading on the system has already resulted in strategies by some participants to deal with upload challenges and concerns over time delays as indicated below:

"The best execution plan at times is that some departmental coordinators are assisted by the provincial MPAT coordinator and load their information in her office to ensure that evidence is submitted on time." (Interview 9)

We still have issues logging on, we have issues with our logins and access but we have a parallel system because the [MPAT] system is not reliable." (Interview 46)

“I had my login in advance so I could upload the evidence in advance piece by piece so I was ready once the deadline arose.” (Interview 36)

Related to the uploading on the system was the duration of time which it was open. The timeframes and capacity of the system were repeatedly identified as needing to be addressed and one of the main suggestions expressed by respondents was to open uploading on the system earlier so as to avoid the web-traffic delays associated with uploading during particularly busy times. The following quotes illustrate:

“It would be nice if the system could be open 3 months before.” (Interview 46)

“A web-based system is ok in terms of functionality but one month is too short to get it all through a consultative process. We need two months for a consultative process with management in its entirety. There are always problems with the system, technical difficulties. The system could be open for longer, then we can choose when we want to do the assessment.” (Interview 15)

Staffing was another area where there were serious concerns about the resources to undertake MPAT, particularly in Office of the Premier (OtP). Estimates of the time required for MPAT by OtPs varied from 2 full months of work for 1.5 people (Interview 4) to 12000 person hours when all related audit considerations are taken into account (Focus Group 2). While these vary considerably, there was near universal consensus that MPAT requires considerable dedicated and shared time for which there are not currently enough resources.

4.2.2 Assessment reports

The process of undertaking self-assessment and producing the assessment was widely reported as occurring in a straightforward manner as intended. Respondents reflected that with experience they have scored themselves more honestly over time as it became clear that over-scoring was not particularly useful (Interview 1).

However, respondents in one province indicated that the completion of the self-assessment report proved a challenge because *“We default into a competitive mode rather than reflective mode”*(Interview 20). This means that the weaknesses will not be reflected outside of the department to anyone else for fear that they are used as a stick (Focus Group 4). Specifically, this referred to two KPAs where there were clear inconsistencies between the self-assessment scores and the final outcomes. Part of the explanation given for this was that *“Lots of confidential issues came out of some of the reports – and they contain*

names. If there is a security breach and this is a major issue. Reporting on this information is very difficult to do.” (Focus Group 4)

Another respondent noted that the assessment reporting process is taken extremely seriously where management discusses and takes “*a step by step approach that will drill down to understand why performance is the way it is. Also, there is a need [to] strike a balance in reporting to portfolio committee on where some of the weaknesses lie which provides assistance beyond compliance but that also says these are the areas that still need to be worked on.*” (Focus Group 25)

On the whole most participants find the assessment report uncontroversial. The sign-off process follows the standard process of presentation for discussion by executive management and then DG or HoD sign-off.

4.2.3 Internal audit review

Internal audit is intended to play an important role in the assessment process by verifying the submissions as per the prescribed evidence descriptions, although this does not appear to be the case in all instances.

Amongst some respondents individuals reflected that internal audit’s ability to undertake thorough verification is underutilised in the current approach.

“So much money is put into the internal audit team that we need to place more reliance on internal audit.” (Interview 34)

It was also acknowledged that the nature of work holds a potential that is unfulfilled.

“Internal audit verification only goes as far as certifying the existence of the document, the moderator goes into the content of the document....what value is internal audit verification for us? [It’s a] waste of time if they don’t go into the substance and content of the document.....They can add value.” (Focus Group 10)

In other instances capacity issues associated with internal audit were said to limit their involvement (Focus Group 30), while another group expressed a concern that the confidentiality of data could be jeopardised without strict access control (Focus Group 8).

Some respondents indicated that the role of internal audit has increased with the realisation that the self-assessment scores have to be as realistic as possible to withstand moderation (Focus Group 35). Internal audit “*basically conducts an internal moderation process*” (Focus Group 35). Another respondent said, “*Our internal audit is for all intents and purposes our moderators. Including internal audit is a big plus for us. Internal audit improves*

moderation" (Focus Group 17). While this is a positive reflection on the role of internal audit, the following section goes into some detail to highlight serious concerns raised about the moderation process.

4.2.4 Moderation

A common refrain across the respondents in this assessment was that apart from web-based system technical challenges, moderation represented the weakest point in the MPAT process. The following quotes describe:

"Where we have a gripe with the MPAT process is the moderation process, moderators are not experts in the field." (Interview 4)

"Moderators didn't always understand the documents we gave and it wasn't always clear what we needed to give. One document covers two separate policies and that confuses the moderators, [they] don't have time to read through everybody's policies." (Interview 50)

"I got a feeling the moderator didn't understand what they were doing...they didn't understand the cycles... [They] need to be experts in the field they are moderating." (Focus Group 16)

"This year was a joke; all they sent back was the self-assessment tool with generic comments. In previous years [they] sent a detailed breakdown." (Interview 47)

"Your moderators have to be really clued up. You can't have a moderator from a department that hasn't scored well...Sometimes can see the moderator doesn't know what the hell they are talking about." (Interview 45)

"...would like to know more about the moderators. Are the ICT moderators' specialist people?" (Focus Group 27)

"Are the moderators experts? We find out the moderators didn't look at the full picture." (Focus Group 23)

"I am worried about the moderators. One feels you are not always understood. Voor die hand liggend. There is inconsistency in the moderators, depending on the moderator you get, you will get a different score. ...If you do the moderation you need to know the business well, you need to know [the sector] well." (Focus Group 30)

"At the moment it doesn't add value to me. I look at it from a perspective as someone who has done supply chain for a number of years. But it's clear that the moderators haven't. The feedback leaves me confused. If

moderators were experts, there would be peer learning. People are not chosen on the basis of being experts in the field.” (Focus Group 6)

“The competency of the moderators is in question. Moderation is not at all accurate. MPAT Coordinators should sit with the moderators to develop thinking. Moderators need to engage with the data provided.” (Focus Group 15)

“Questions the same, evidence the same, everything is the same, but the score dropped. How? Could only be the moderator.” (Focus Group 2)

“[M]oderators aren’t going into the document, but it may have what you are looking for if it is engaged with thoroughly”. (Focus Group 4)

“Moderators should be experts and gurus in their specific fields. It is very frustrating when the moderator pins you down that you have not submitted any reflections of change to your strategic plan over 5 years. Obviously we have planned well if there are no changes.” (Focus Group 23)

One focus group presented strong views around the moderation process expressing the view that new data is introduced in the moderation process leading to a lack of transparency. The specific concerns were with the use of secondary evidence and the extent of transparency about the calculation of scores.

“[W]e are not in disagreement with the use of secondary information, but want to know how they are using it.” (Focus Group 8)

The same focus group indicated concern about having access to the information they are being moderated on, particularly information from DPSA. Another respondent indicated that secondary information is used as a basis for moderation and that this has not been shared ahead of time preventing the department from determining the accuracy of the information (Interview 5).

“You try to report in terms of the moderation criteria. There is some discrepancy on the scores and you cannot pinpoint where the deficiencies lie.” (Focus Group 5)

Many of the respondents indicated that their concern around the moderation process was caused by a lack of feedback to explain the thinking or rationale for altering their MPAT scores. As such, the comment that more feedback was needed was ubiquitous:

“...more feedback, explain why marked down, the feedback is too thin. Better communication is needed of the results. Face to face engagement with the moderators after challenge period would be good. Gives us a

chance to explain our processes and explain how we do what we do.” (Focus Group 10)

“...feedback needs to be given to departments and the best way that this can be done is that moderators speak to line managers and coordinators about the results/moderated feedback.” (Focus Group 28)

“whenever there is a need for moderation it should be face to face – especially during the challenge period.” (Focus Group 4)

“Feedback is not adequate; there is no feedback after the challenge period. DPME need to communicate after the moderation has taken place.” (Focus Group 10)

Other groups indicated that standardised, generic comments in the moderated report are not useful (Focus Group 2). Detailed comments were considered to work better and allow the department to clear up failures or provide additional evidence easily (Focus Group 7). There was a view that the level of maturity of the moderation process is fairly low and that the level of feedback needs to improve; too often moderator comments are generic and do not give clear indications of where the department has fallen short (Focus Group 2).

One of the recurring issues raised was whether the moderators were applying a different set of criteria for rating the department to those who self-assessed. The following quotes highlight this issue:

“a Moderators Guideline that will show exactly what the moderators will look at, the criteria on what you are supposed to provide, what you are moderated against. DPME should pull up people to create these guidelines by work-shopping the moderators guidelines with other departments.” (Focus Group 4)

“We need a generic template for evidence then we can know we have met the criteria. There mustn’t be different criteria for moderators, in the book, the moderators criteria is stronger and the evidence is softer, internal audit goes with the softer rather than the harder. There is discrepancy between [provincial] Auditing Services and DPME on the moderation, maybe they should align so that there is no confusion.” (Interview 14)

“[It would be] useful to try to standardise the moderation criteria to try help build consistency with the process and better feedback to assist departments with a direction for their improvement plans.” (Focus Group 29)

From the above it is clear that moderation is one of the biggest challenges to the efficient implementation of MPAT. When considered with the issues raised around internal audit, it is clear that the potential synergies between these two processes have not yet been achieved. If concerns raised about the levels of expertise of moderators and lack of feedback from them are accurate, the learning and improvement purpose of the process has the potential to be undermined when participants believe they are not being credibly moderated or that their scores are being altered on spurious or subjective grounds. The following quotes reflect this:

“It is not fair, the IA has an ongoing relationship with the KPA managers and then moderators drop the scores. What is our [IA] role exactly? If moderators don’t value our considerations then why are we doing it? How useful and accurate is moderation?” (Focus Group 35)

4.2.5 Challenges and final scores

A challenge period was introduced into MPAT to allow for clarifications where departments felt that they were unfairly moderated. Although the introduction of the challenge period was generally well received, with one focus group describing it as *“very useful in addressing moderation shortcomings”* (Focus Group 3), some concerns were raised about how the challenges were handled.

One official noted that *“We spent much of January and February fighting. I am not sure they have the time and inclination to go through all the evidence. This time we have referred them to a specific part of the document so they don’t have to go through the whole document”* (Focus Group 23).

A respondent from another province felt that at times there are big gaps between the *“self-assessment and the moderated scores. Something is not right there. There is no correlation between self-assessment and the final moderated score. How prepared are the moderators?”* (Focus Group 26)

Respondents indicated that at times final scores come back unchanged though evidence that was required has been presented. Officials found it a pointless exercise to invite departments to challenge their scores when the evidence is presented again and is not even considered (Focus Group 26). Similar accounts were expressed by respondents of two departments in another province. One respondent stated, *“We don’t get feedback after the challenge, where is that feedback to explain why we still don’t meet those requirements? To explain to us what they expect?”* (Focus Group 10)

Departments have expressed frustration that they are not able to engage directly with the moderators during the challenge but with DPME instead. One respondent articulated this as such.

“This is very frustrating because there were certain issues that were marked down but DPME can’t really help with what level of understanding moderators had and what the department is doing.” (Focus Group 35)

Another respondent found this inability to engage with the moderators ineffective to the process (Focus Group 14). Some departments made explicit mention of the benefits of face to face engagement. At the same time, concerns were raised that the challenge period is run by DPME without the original moderators, where those are not DPME staff (Focus Group 21). Particularly in light of the positions expressed in terms of moderation, it is clear that departments would like to engage directly with the moderators who decide to mark down the score where this is considered beneficial to the objectives of the assessment.

Another type of concern raised was that in submitting challenges that there is limited consideration of the context of the department (Interview 19). This is a sentiment that has been raised by several respondents. This lack of understanding the context of the department pits the moderators against the internal audit which is seen to be doing the internal moderation as explained above. There is therefore value for moderators and the internal audit to engage more during the challenge period (Focus Group 35).

“As soon as you get the final report back, whether the moderator has reconsidered your information, that’s it; the lid is closed. We would want more information to be submitted to the department in the first moderated draft so that we have a fairly good idea as to what needs to change.” (Focus Group 6)

Fortunately, a number of departments reported having challenged the scores and indicated this has worked in some instances. The scores of one department went up after the challenge period (Focus Group 17) and another found the challenge period useful as well (Focus Group 16). While this is encouraging as it is in line with the intentions of the challenge period, the preceding accounts provide a clear indication that the challenge process can be improved and that departments seek clear, substantiated motivations for why scores have been altered so that they can learn from the process and improve in the future.

The following figure provides an indication of the proportional distribution of scoring effects of the moderation and challenge process on a per standard basis for all departments, as split by KPA.

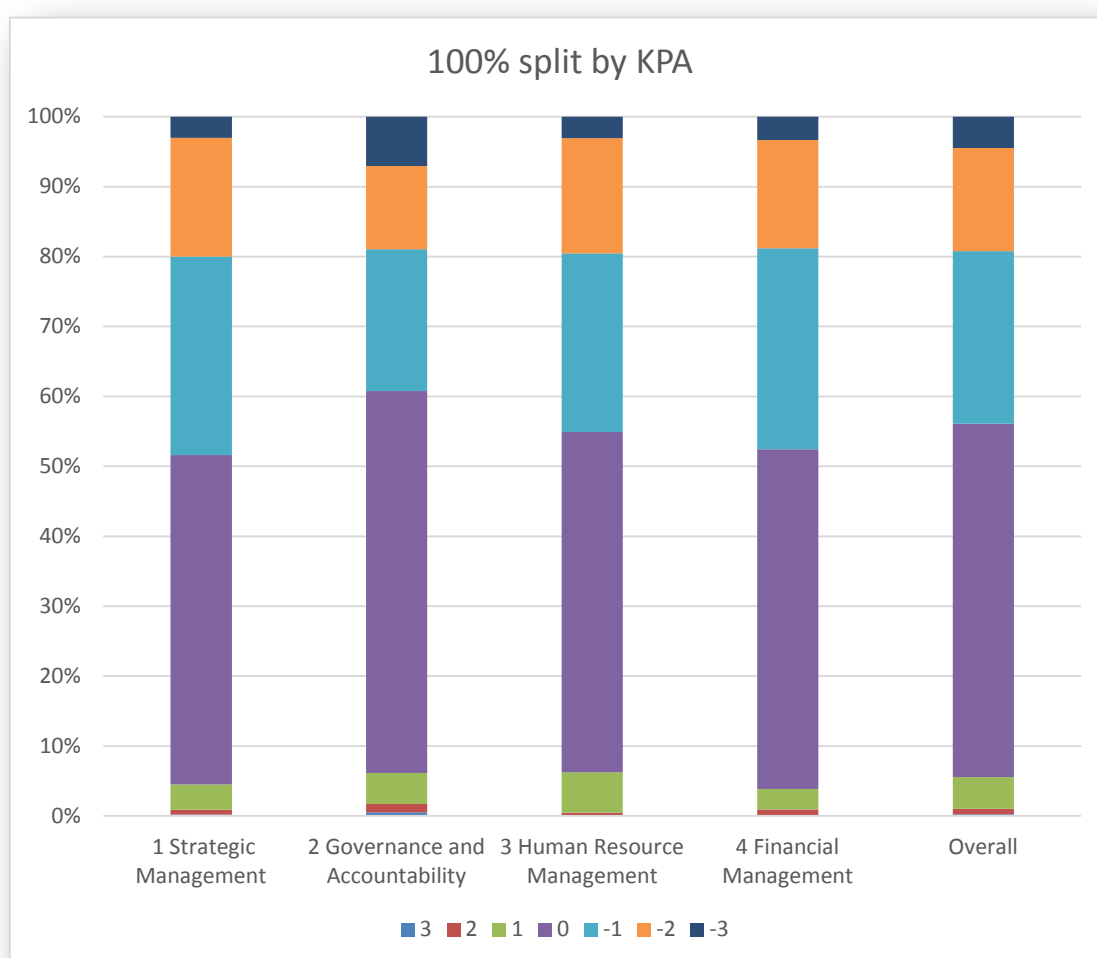


Figure 13: Distribution by score difference between self and final assessments

From the above graph it is clear that the greatest frequency of moderated effects per standard is no change at all (50.5%). There are clearly also some improvements as a result, but these tend to be infrequent (5.3%) when compared to declines of -1, -2 and -3 respectively (43.9% in total). Keeping in mind that different KPAs are represented by more standards than others (KPA 1=3; KPA 2=12; KPA 3=7; KPA 4= 7), it is remarkable that proportionally most of the changes are comparable across KPA, with the exception of KPA 2 where there are a greater proportion of outliers on both sides.

When considered in light of some of the concerns raised around moderation and the challenge process, the above distributions reinforce the sensitivity around this process as nearly half of all standards are marked down as part of the moderation process.

4.2.6 Developing the improvement plan

The improvement plan, a key output in the results-chain representing the roadmap for improvement, was a product of considerable ambiguity across

engagements with officials. This would appear to be because of the wide variety of interpretations as to what an improvement plan is in this context and how it relates to other planning processes and products. Responses from the survey questionnaire are helpful in shedding light on what form the improvement plan takes.

Table 3: Using MPAT results for planning purposes

Which statement do you think best describes how your department uses MPAT results for planning purposes?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
We do not have a management improvement plan or any plan that takes MPAT results into consideration	2.8%	2
We take MPAT results into account across a range of planning documents, but not one in particular	29.2%	21
We have management improvement plan informed by MPAT	12.5%	9
We are implementing and monitoring a management improvement plan informed by MPAT	29.2%	21
We are seeing improvements in management performance as a result of implementing and monitoring a management improvement plan informed by MPAT	26.4%	19
answered question		72
skipped question		0

From the above, it is clear that departments without an MPAT related improvement plan of any sort are in the minority, measuring only 2.8%. Interestingly, 29.2% of all respondents indicated they do not have an 'MPAT improvement plan' per se, but instead incorporate and integrate MPAT across a range of other planning documents. However, the remainder, 68.1%, indicate that they have an MPAT specific improvement plan.

The following figure disaggregates these figures by province to give some insight into the variety of practices around improvement planning.

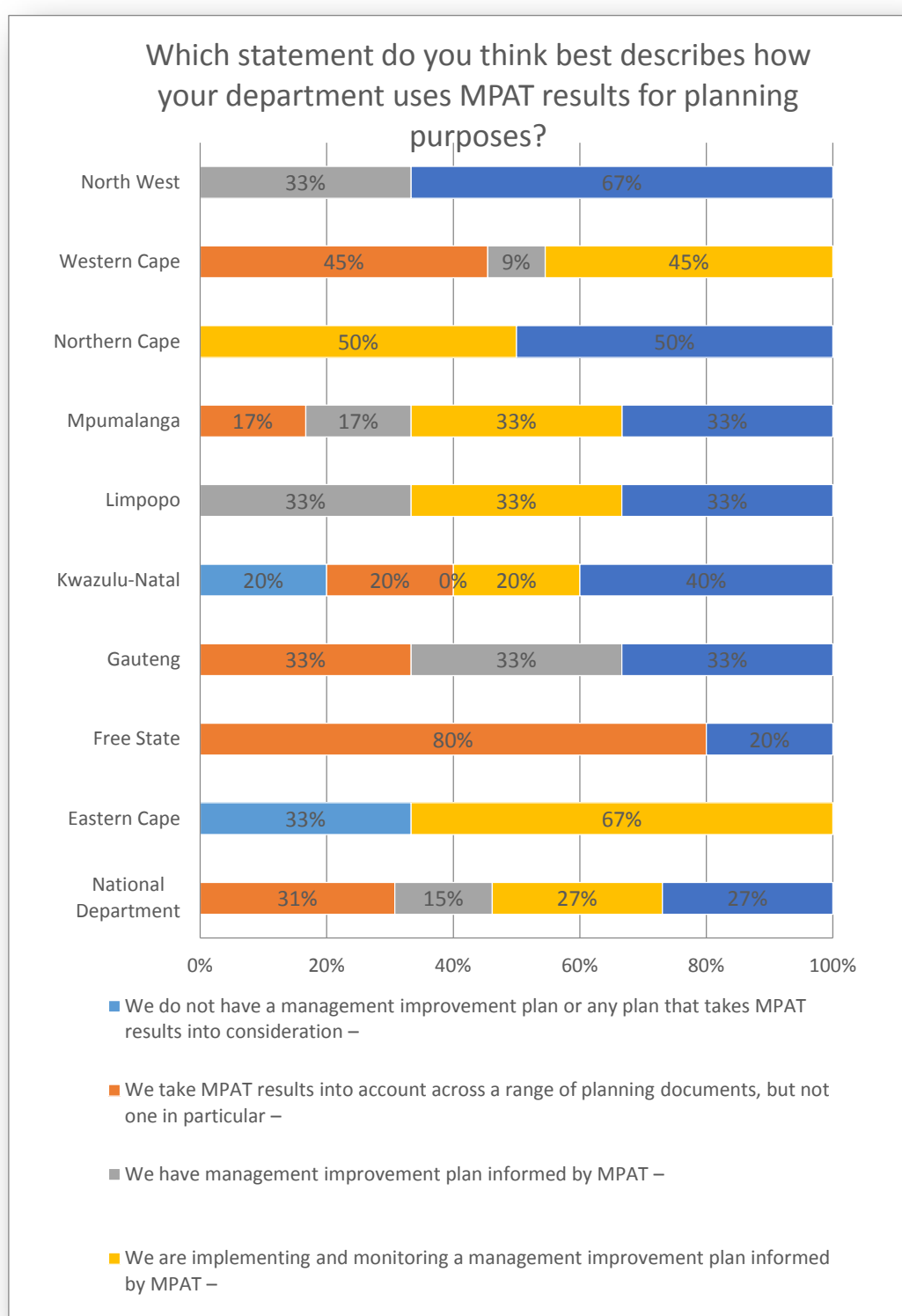


Figure 14: How MPAT informs improvement planning

From the above it seems clear that there are some provinces, and departments, more inclined to integrate MPAT within existing plans than develop a separate planning document. The Western Cape, Free State and National Departments stand out in this regard. One respondent explained that there are many plans to

improve the work of the departments, including corrective action plans which incorporate the MPAT in some way or the other and are discussed in monthly or weekly meetings with top management to look at compliance to deadlines for submissions and prescripts (Interview 37).

The experience of a province is explained in the following quote:

“After the first MPAT process where we developed a format for improvement plans, departments developed then, we didn’t monitor whether they implemented the improvement plans. We are looking at results not monitoring. More helpful when infusing the improvement agenda into the APPs, we are encouraging all departments to do it. However, not all departments in the province have developed these as yet.” (Interview 5)

The issue of the timing when developing improvement plans is another issue that was raised. There are some that wait for the moderation scores before they initiate these plans and the concern here is that these scores come too late in the process. Final results arrive too late to apply to the immediately following year so they can only be included in the subsequent year’s improvement plan. The time lag in getting results means that the results of MPAT 1.3 came too late to fully inform the improvement plan for MPAT 1.4 (Interview 47). However, some departments have found a way around this problem.

“We worked with standards in a piecemeal fashion, in July we started meeting and engaging with the MPAT process. It is too late to take remedial action that will affect our scores. We have now developed an improvement plan to cover us to the next cycle.” (Interview 50)

“Before moderated results, we start with the areas where we scored less than 4...the improvement plan is based on the moderated results. We are institutionalising that process and have it embedded in the operational plans.” (Interview 45)

A respondent noted that improvement plans play a role to “encourage departments not to wait for moderation, so they must tick and red flag it, because you know where you were doing well and then you develop the plan. This is to help you to know that after moderation you are not expecting miracles from the moderation. Between now and the [final] version build your capacity and your skills. Most departments don’t see value in doing it, so have to follow up to encourage. This helps to internalise where your weaknesses are.” (Interview 48)

The improvement plans seem to account for the improvements departments see. This was expressed by one respondent who said, “We’ve also gotten

specific people to monitor [the improvement plan]. We report on it at our management meetings so we have institutionalised it. We keep ourselves in check assessing ourselves every step of the way and we implement remedial steps. This department has been unstable for a while so the fact that we have moved towards greater stability is a great achievement and we attribute some of these to MPAT.” (Interview 38)

Others have incorporated this plan into existing reporting structures.

“The improvement plan has been tabled at EXCO and we are having bilateral meetings with branch EXCOs. We are pushing that MPAT appears in performance agreements. We have included MPAT in our regular quarterly reporting on M&E” (NMC5). Another department has had the MPAT improvement plan as a standing item on their EXCO agenda for the last two years (Interview 13). For another respondent these regular monthly meetings on the implementation of the improvement plan are a big contributor to the increase in MPAT scores (Interview 34).

Some respondents were adamant that the improvement plan is actually part and parcel of an ongoing process:

“...as soon as we get the results from OTP we develop the corrective action plan. That is the improvement plan. We present the results to management. We start working with programmes to develop improvement plans which are monitored and presented to senior management.” (Interview 37)

“... [The improvement plan] is a way of life, it's not an event; we see this as mainstream to our work.” (Interview 7)

“How do we then integrate the work that we do on MPAT into the everyday work? We have developed a good improvement plan and we are beginning to implement our improvement plan on a regular process.” (Interview 20)

However, not all departments find the improvement plan to be as useful. One respondent reported that there is fatigue around reporting and reporting separately for MPAT may add to this. The following quotes express these issues:

“We write the improvement plans, and it is a paper exercise. Departments don't actually use it. Maybe we don't have the capacity to monitor it. We identify the gaps. It is already their jobs, they know what to do [and] they just struggle to do it.” (Interview 46)

*“It is not seen as strategic on the strategic management agenda.”
(Interview 50)*

*“We were not able to see the impact of the improvement plans, not enough time to see whether the improvement plans have had an impact.”
(Focus Group 12)*

In another instance the utility of the improvement plans was questioned as it relates to improving performance since it was said that *“to a large extent it deals with compliance issues not with real hard core with management performance. The plan deals with compliance and not necessarily the improvement of management issues”* (Interview 25). Others found that staffing issues contributed to challenges with the improvement plan, because the post anticipated to do this is not filled yet (Interview 27).

Support from executive offices

Considering that MPAT is coordinated from the level of the political executive at both national and provincial level, the extent to which there is satisfaction with the role they play in supporting the process is an important indication of how well it is being implemented, particularly with regards to the improvement plan.

The general satisfaction level for executive office support, regardless of sphere, in undertaking MPAT saw more than half (56.3%) of the respondents indicate feeling satisfied with the support while about a quarter (28.2%) indicated that they were very satisfied. Less than one in ten (7.0%) indicated they were unsure about their level of satisfaction, while the same amount (7.0%) indicated they were dissatisfied and only one (1.4%) indicated he/she was very dissatisfied. However, when disaggregating data between provincial and national spheres, it becomes clear that there are some provinces and national departments which are less satisfied with the support received than others, as expressed in the graph below.

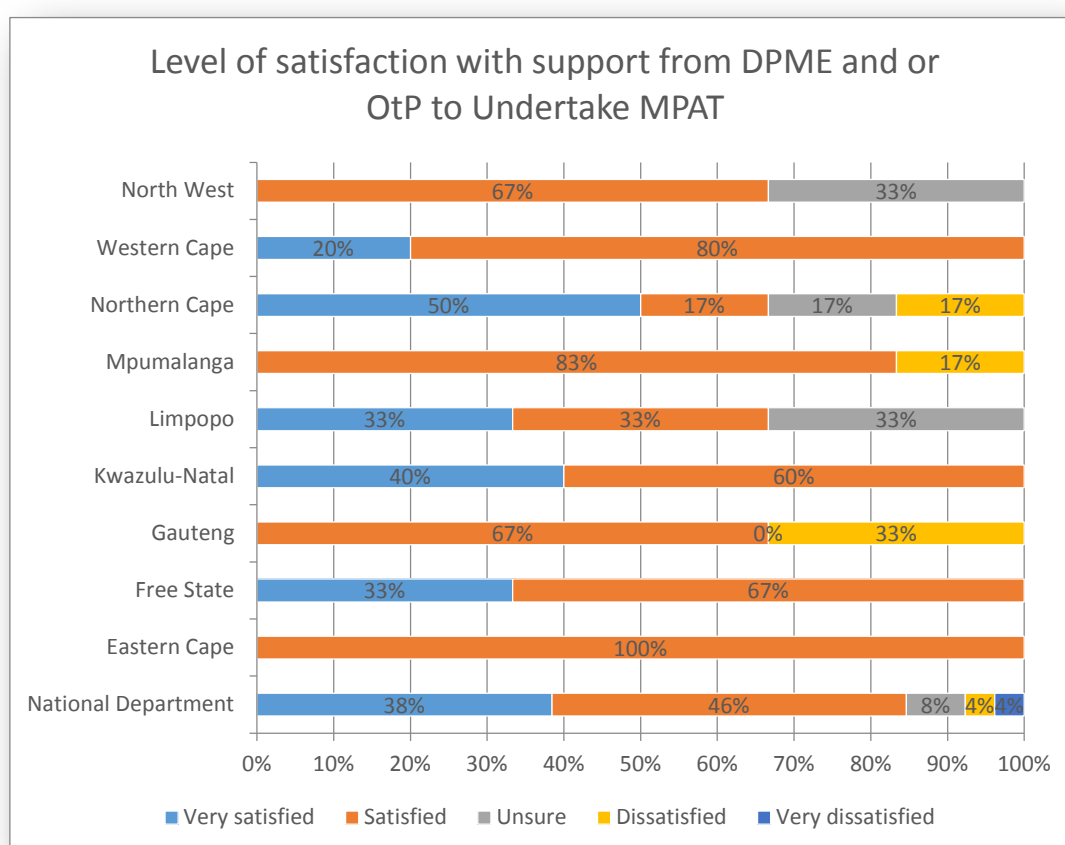


Figure 15: Satisfaction rate with support services

From the above, it is clear that amongst respondents' departments in Gauteng, Northern Cape, Mpumalanga and two national departments there is dissatisfaction with the support provided. Amongst the provinces, in the Western Cape, KZN, Free State and Eastern Cape, respondents indicated only satisfaction with the support received from OtPs and DPME.

At the provincial level, accounts of the work of OtPs provide insight into the kind of support provided. In one province, the OtP was described as pulling all the province's departments' information together, analyse it, and put it into a provincial plan to adhere to and render support alongside this for MPAT 1.3 (Interview 30). In another instance, respondents indicated that a decision was taken that improvement plans were required for scores of three and below. Whereas in the previous iterations of MPAT the departments developed their own improvement plans, they are now driven from a high level in OtP which helps to prioritise and institutionalise the concept of improvement plans (Interview 29).

One OtP was described as engaging of departments, making suggestions about areas for improvement based on the final scores (Interview 4). A participant

from the OtP raised the challenge of driving the implementation throughout the year stating, *“It’s difficult and not that sustainable in the medium term because it is not consistently driven in the medium term, focus moves away. ... There is no single staff member to coordinate MPAT.”* (Interview 14)

It was raised by a few respondents from another province that there are still major capacity issues at the OtP which resulted in a lack of support in the development of the improvement plan from them. An official remarked that when it comes to the support when developing their improvement plan, the OtP is *“nowhere to be found when you need them but ready to be a principal”* (Interview 42).

Support from transversal departments

Given that there are different custodian departments for different KPAs, the extent to which these departments are available to provide support in the development of improvement plans is an important indication of whether departments that do not meet minimum standards are receiving help from sector experts efficiently, namely DPSA (HRM) and National Treasury (Finance). When accounting officers were asked how satisfied they were with the support received from transversal departments with the development of improvement plans, 8.3% indicated they are very satisfied and 48.6% indicated they are satisfied. However, 22.2% of respondents indicated they are unsure, while another 20.8% registered some form of dissatisfaction. This is illustrated in the graph below.

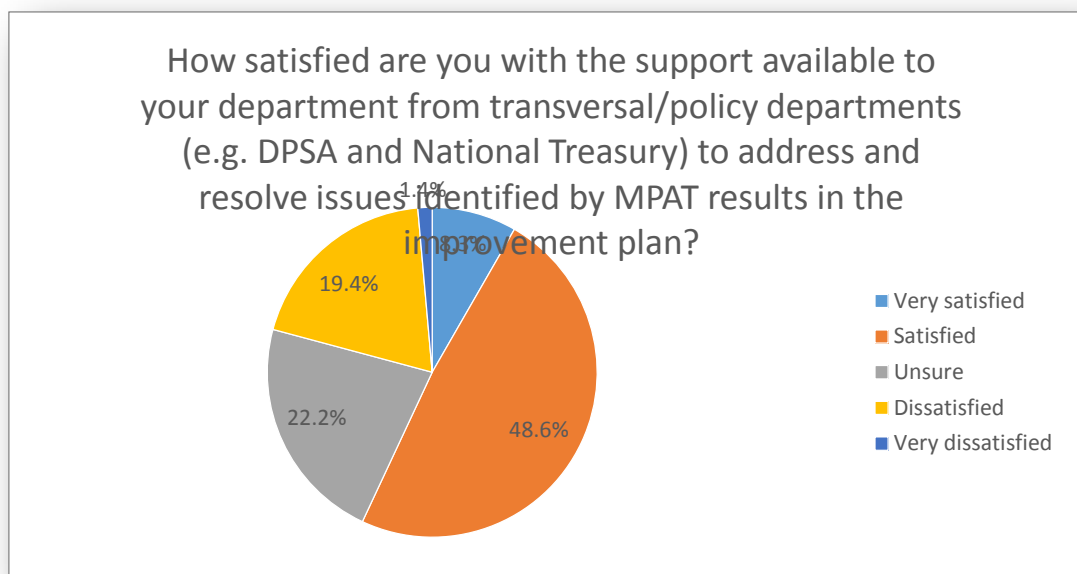


Figure 16: Support from transversal/policy departments

From the above, it is clear that nearly half of all responding accounting officers are not yet satisfied with the support they are receiving from the DPSA and National Treasury in relation to resolving issues identified by MPAT. The following exemplifies this issue:

“We get assistance from the transversal departments but not enough. Mostly we don’t get much help from the transversal departments, even with the intervention [it] didn’t make a huge difference.” (Interview 2)

“The challenges in the main are not so much on MPAT but the transversal/policy departments (e.g. DPSA and National Treasury). In some instances requirements are not communicated to departments and therefore there is no clarity i.e. job access strategy. There are also challenges with unrealistic targets i.e. 100% of disciplinary cases being resolved within timeframes. In some instances its questions around value add of some of the Requirements i.e. the template of the Service delivery improvement plan.” (Survey Respondent 2)

In particular, HRM related issues tended be the focus of where support was considered to be lacking, with multiple respondents asking for guidance on the SDIP in particular. The following quotes indicate some of the issues raised:

“DPSA is not providing templates in advance, is not providing assistance. DPSA’s core business is supporting departments with their KPAs, how does MPAT assess the extent of DPSA’s support? Departments are not 100% responsible for their performance on some of the standards – rely on DPSA. And that brings them down. DPSA has expertise in their department and yet they do poorly on MPAT. This tri-partite model doesn’t work.” (Focus Group 15)

“Very satisfied with DPME and satisfied with National Treasury but unsure about DPSA. They tend to be iffy when giving answers. We had to do a self-discovery [on the SDIP]... They could even categorise departments in terms of whether they are at the coal face of service delivery and policy departments. Turnaround times could be improved.” (Interview 6)

“We have yet to see DPSA. They give us a headache. They are supposed to regulate HR side. DPSA loaded the disability and gender framework three weeks before MPAT deadline on [MPAT] 1.3. There was not enough time to respond to it and incorporate it.” (Interview 46)

“We are totally dependent on DPSA for HR plan rating; they don’t give you feedback so that you can input that in MPAT.” (Focus Group 12)

However, there were also indications that respondents had received support from DPSA, particularly around the improvement plan (Interview 33). Another respondent indicated they recalled a *“provincial presentation noting the issues of standards by DPSA”*, presenting an opportunity to look at the *“universal trends of what issues are in place and to have discussion on the standards especially where standards are problematic within departments”* (Interview 28). Despite this, such comments appeared to be exceptions when compared with some of the other issues arising.

Another concern raised by respondents was the perceived lack of integration and complementarity between the work of DPSA and DPME on MPAT. The coordination between DPME and DPSA *“about what each wants on the management standards”* (Interview 29) was another point of concern. This was echoed by some of the other statements:

“DPSA requires labour cases in a particular way, DPME needs to be integrated so that compliance is the same on both.” (Focus Group 12)

“...there is not proper alignment between DPME and DPSA.” (Focus Group 35)

Based on the satisfaction levels indicated, and the data reflected here, it would appear that there is certainly room for improvement in the provision of assistance by transversal policy departments with the need to engage DPSA, in particular, and with the close cooperation of DPME.

4.2.7 Synthesis

In terms of the implementation of the MPAT process, a number of sub-criteria highlighted potential threats to the fidelity of the programme theory that may result in less than efficient execution. Beginning with tools of the MPAT process, problems were noted with the functionality of the web-based system as well as the time available for uploading of documentation which reflected in some dissatisfaction (12.7%) with the tools available. Qualitative data indicated particular concerns with the IT infrastructure and insufficient time available given some of the uploading challenges and limitations.

Only minor issues were raised with the actual self-assessment process within departments, with those issues raised potentially contextual organisational culture challenges rather substantive issues with the self-assessment process. The experience of the use of internal audit in vetting the submissions varied to some extent. There seemed to be some evidence that departments were using this process to better prepare for moderation, where the bulk of the challenges from the focus groups and interviews emerged.

Moderation concerns potentially affecting the successful implementation of MPAT focussed on the 'expertise' of the moderators undertaking assessment and the feedback received. Perceptions that moderators were not well-prepared or failed to fully consider the information available to them were heightened by a lack of meaningful feedback provided, and some accounts of no feedback at all. The value of direct engagement was emphasised as a means of potentially addressing the issues arising from the moderation and were explained as adding to the learning and improvement objectives of the intervention.

Challenges with moderation inevitably fed into the challenges and finalisation process. Not unexpectedly, the end results of moderation, challenges and finalisation led to considerable declines in the scores received across departments (43.9% of all standards were marked down), although there were a minority of instances indicating scores moderated upwards as well (5.3%). Combined with the doubts expressed over the expertise and thoroughness of the moderators, this presents a potential threat to the learning and improvement intentions of the intervention as departments feel unfairly judged without sufficient recourse or explanation for negative judgements.

While the process of moderating, challenging and finalising scores takes some time, the more proactive departments have seized the opportunity to use their self-assessment results to inform on-going improvement rather than await finalisation. This displays an ownership of self-assessment results and mitigates the inefficiencies of the process.

Across all departments, with only a few exceptions, improvement planning is being done by addressing findings through planning and improvement processes (both through integrating existing and initiating new plans) or by incorporating improvement monitoring as standing items for management meetings.

Where there seem to be some process concerns with the development of the improvement plan, output is centred on the support received from different transversal departments. In this regard, DPSA has been identified as the partner where there is greatest scope for more meaningful support of the improvement plan process. However, in order for this to occur, DPME will need to ensure it balances its coordinating role with a strong partnership approach to ensure synergy and complementarity between the two actors. Failure to do so undermines the improvement imperative and has been identified by accounting officers as the area resulting in the lowest levels of satisfaction with the MPAT implementation process.

4.3 Effectiveness

This section sets out some measures of the extent to which MPAT has obtained its objectives, both at the level of whole of government and at the departmental level. The following sub-criteria provide indications as to its effectiveness as an intervention.

4.3.1 Improvements in standard ratings

The starting point for determining the effectiveness of MPAT is to begin by determining what MPAT is saying about changes in management practice. This section considers the changes in the resulting scores on standards of national and provincial departments holistically between the period of MPAT 1.2 and MPAT 1.3.

Figure 17 shows that for each of the KPAs except KPA 1: Strategic Management showed increased scores from MPAT 1.2 to MPAT 1.3. This improvement was greatest in KPA 2 Governance and Accountability. This suggests that there has been an improvement in management practice from 2012 to 2013.

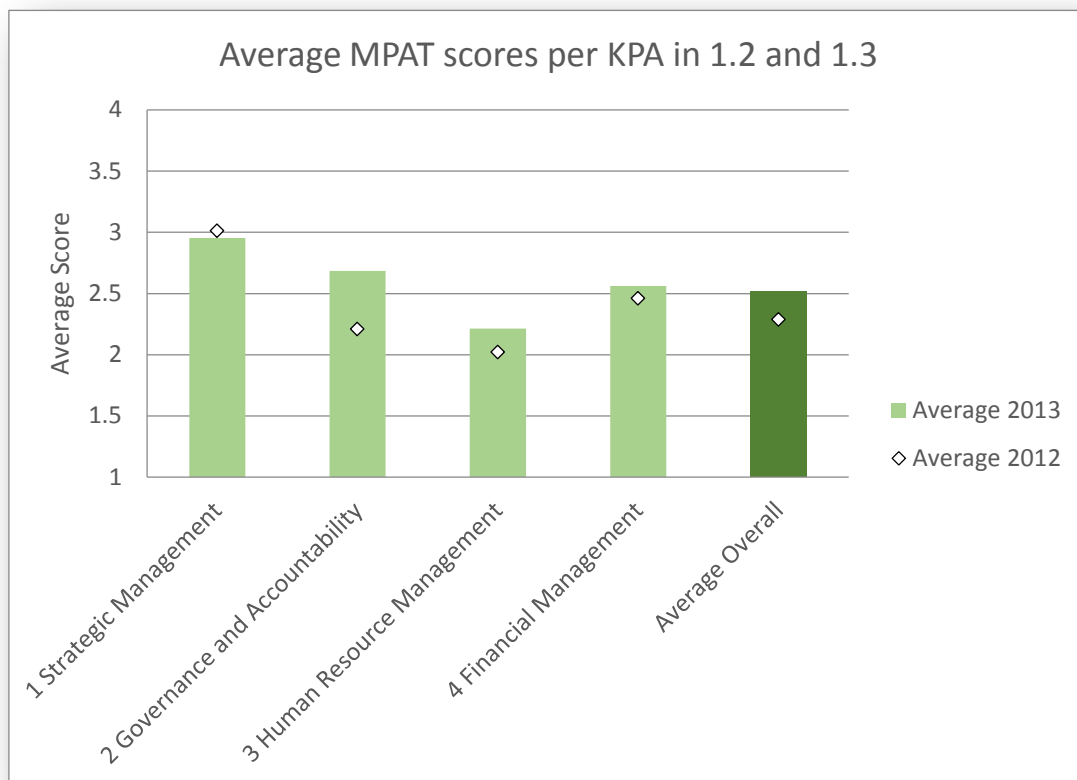


Figure 17: Average MPAT score per KPA in MPAT 1.2 and 1.3

Drilling down to the average scores per KPA at provincial level suggests some trends for KPAs and for specific provinces. Figure 18 below shows that for five of the nine provinces and the national departments scores declined for strategic management, while for 4 out of 9 they increased.

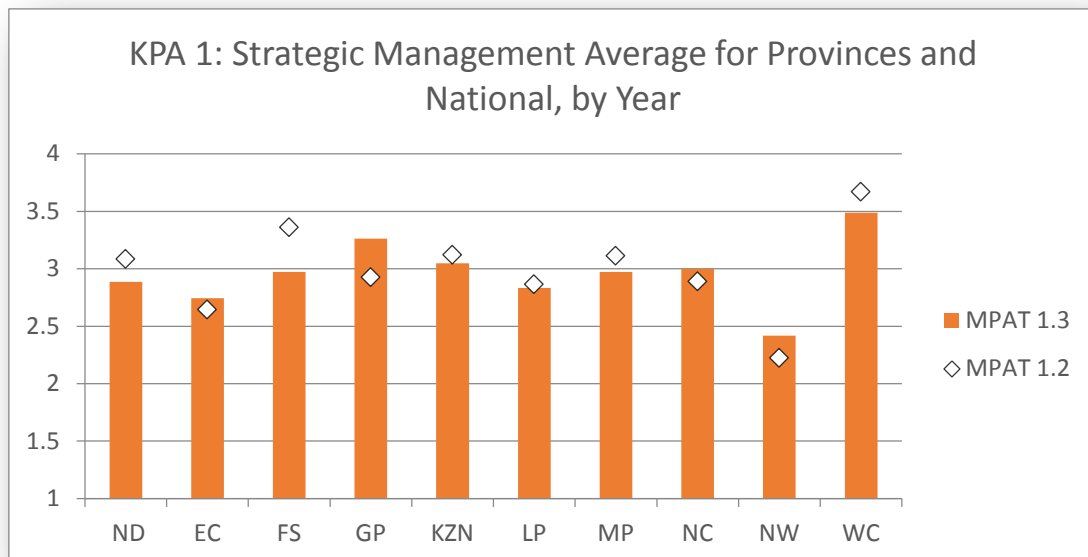


Figure 18: Strategic Management Average Scores by Province

For Governance and Accountability scores improved in seven out of the nine provinces, suggesting an improvement in governance and accountability practice across the board. Only Free State and Mpumalanga showed declines from 1.2 to 1.3.

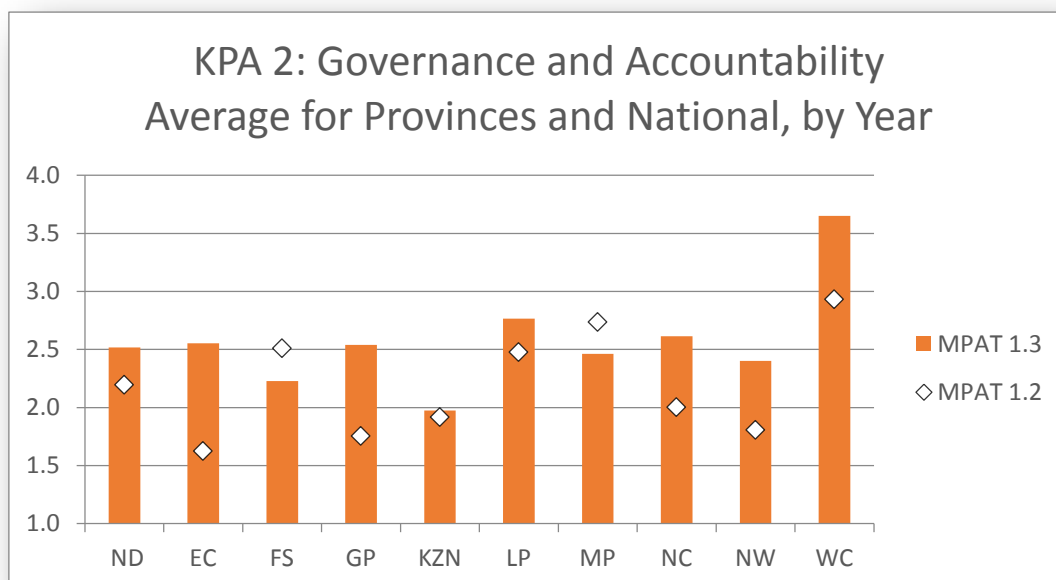


Figure 19: Governance and Accountability Average Scores by Province

In the Human Resource KPA (figure 20), scores were largely static across the provinces, with only a slight improvement showing across the board. The greatest improvements show in the Western Cape and the Eastern Cape.

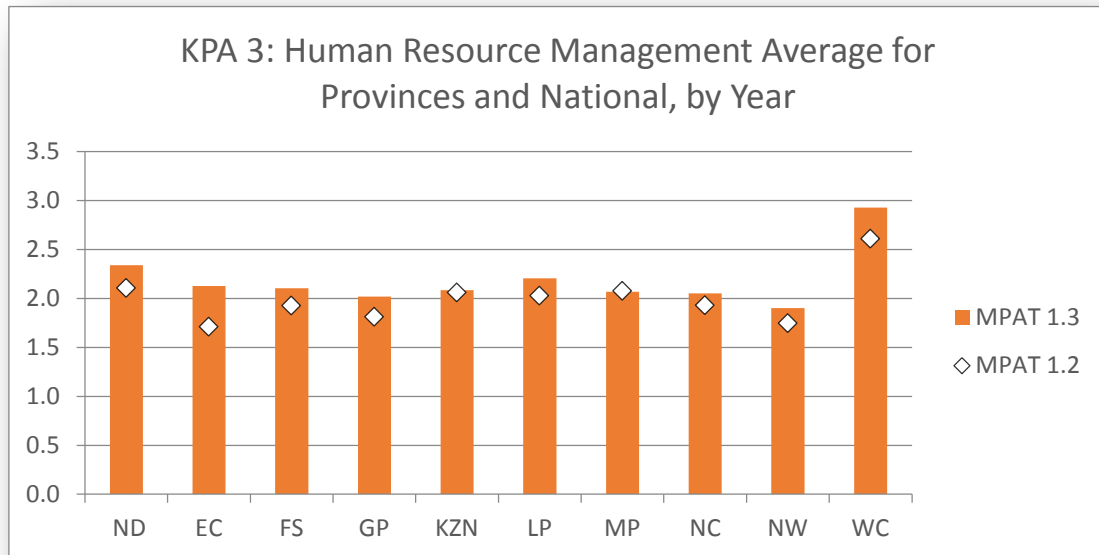


Figure 20: Human Resource Management Average Scores by Province

Figure 21 shows the change in average scores per province for Financial Management. The trend for provinces in general is a slight improvement, with only Mpumalanga showing a significant decline. This suggests a general improvement in financial management across the provinces.

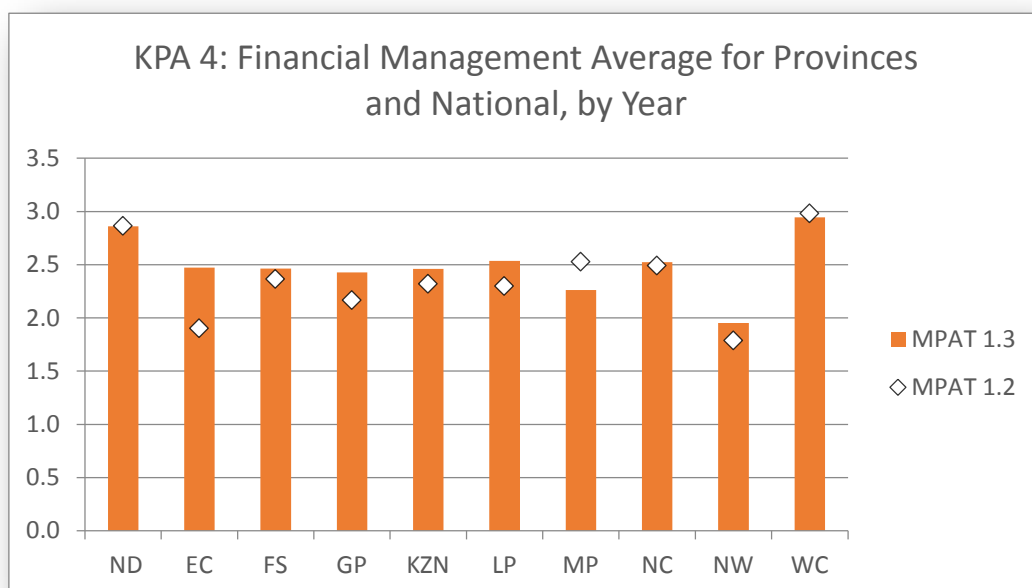


Figure 21: Financial Management Average Scores by Province

Figure 22 below illustrates the changes in MPAT scores per standard over the two cycles across the 155 departments, for the 29 standards common to both rounds. An improved MPAT score in 1.3 is depicted in blue, no change in orange, and a drop in MPAT score in grey. There are five standards where decline is more common than improvement across the state. These are: 1.1.2 Annual Performance Plans; 1.3.1 Monitoring and Evaluation; 2.4.2 Fraud Prevention; 3.3.3 Implementation of SMS PMDS for HOD; and 4.2.2 Payment of Suppliers. Also striking from the figure below is the proportion of departments where there is no movement on the standards at all. The following graph creates the impression that stasis is common in many standards, while many improvements appear may be offset by declines.

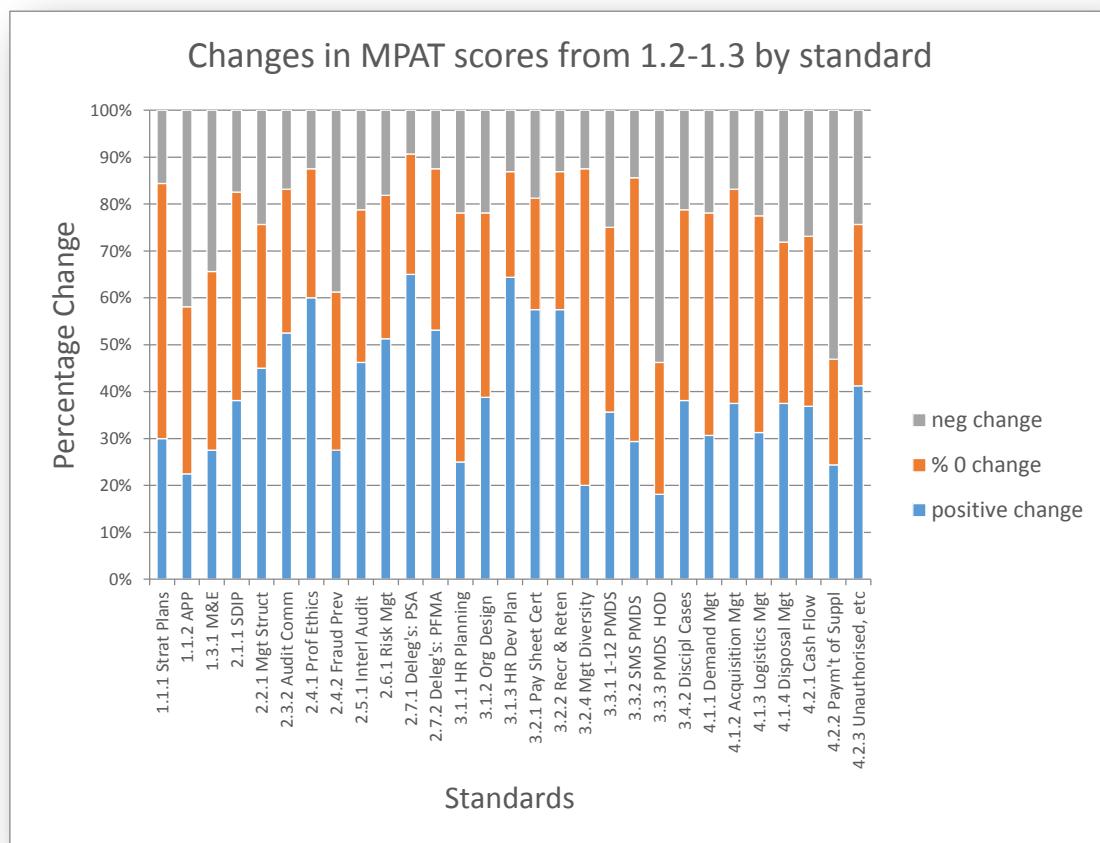


Figure 22: Changes in MPAT scores from versions 1.2-1.3 by standard

Figure 23, below, shows the net change in scores per standards' scores from MPAT 1.2 to 1.3 across all departments. This is calculated as the percentage number of departments that have improved their scores for a standard minus those whose scores have declined. In terms of the 29 comparable standards between 1.2 and 1.3, departments registered a net overall improvement in 24 of these.

These figures suggest a more positive picture, particularly around those five standards where there was a net improvement of more than 40% across government. These standards are: 2.4.1 Assessment of policies and systems to ensure professional ethics; 2.7.1 Delegations in terms of PSA; 2.7.2 Delegations in terms of PFMA; 3.1.3 Assessment of Human Resources Development; and 3.2.2 Application of recruitment and retention practices.

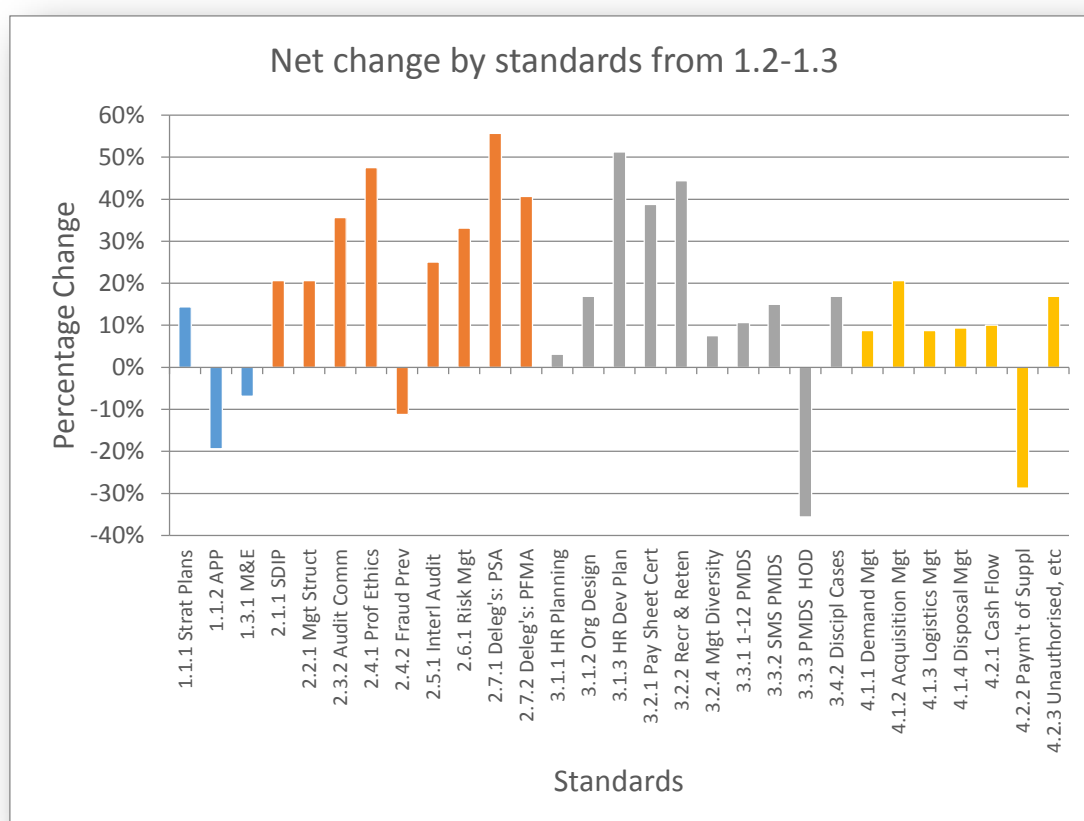


Figure 23: Net change in score by standard from MPAT 1.2-1.3

However, five standards show a net decline in 1.3 against 1.2. These standards are: 1.1.2 APPs; 1.3.1 Use of M&E outputs; 2.4.2 Fraud Prevention; 3.3.3 Implementation of Senior Management Service Performance Management Development System for the HoD; and 4.2.2 Payment of Suppliers within 30 days. These results raise concerns about changes in management practice in these areas.

In terms of the KPAs, from figure 19, each of Governance and Accountability (in orange), HR Management (in grey) and Financial Management (in yellow) had only one standard showing a net decline in scores across departments with net

improvement showing in all standards. However, Strategic Management (in blue) showed net declines in two out of its three standards.

4.3.2 Accuracy of MPAT scores

An important requisite condition to build confidence in the validity of the identified areas of progress and regress above is the extent to which MPAT scores are an accurate reflection of what they seek to measure. Of the 72 participating accounting officers for the departments, only 11.1% indicated they believed that there was some degree of inaccuracy in their department's MPAT scores as compared to what MPAT was intended to measure. This is shown in the graph below.

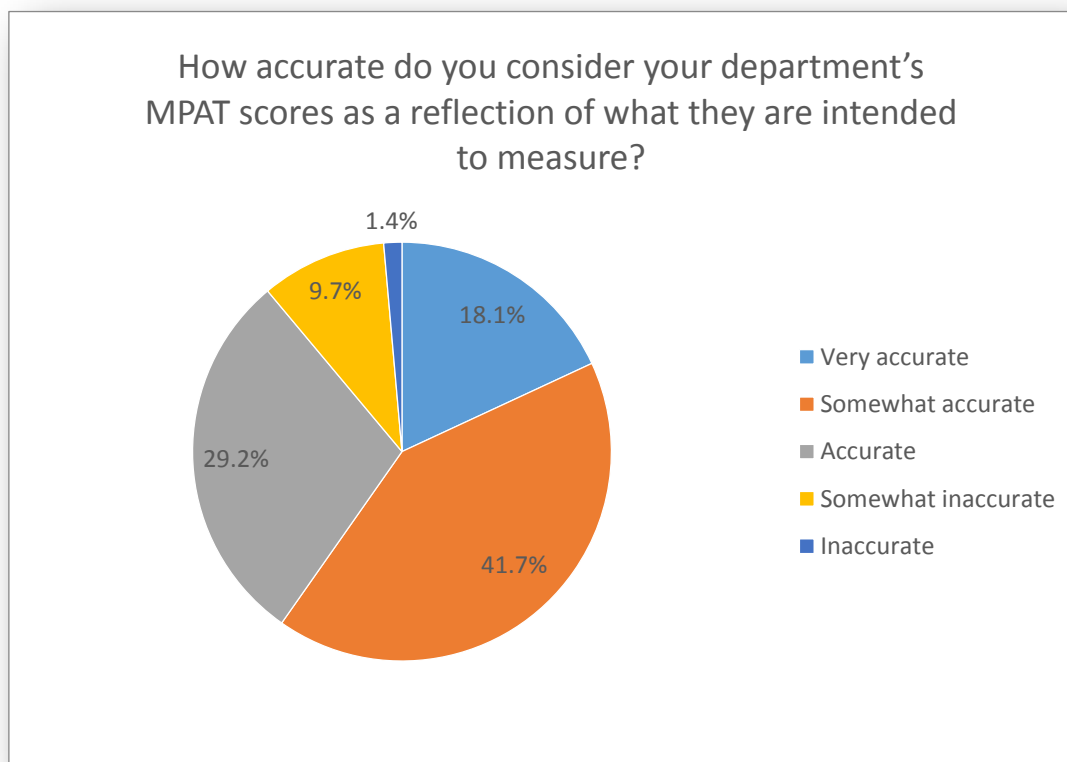


Figure 24: Accuracy of MPAT scores as a reflection of what they intend to measures

When considered with the net changes in MPAT results from 1.2 to 1.3, the overall net improvement against standards is perceived to be a fairly accurate reflection from the HoDs and DGs on the ground. Further, if considering the concerns raised around the moderation process and the finalisation of scores, this may also need to be addressed.

4.3.3 Usefulness

The perceived usefulness of MPAT is a key indication as to whether it is informing improvements in management practice, and ultimately, performance. 97.2% of DGs and HoDs found that MPAT is useful in relation to improving management performance. This is reflected in the table below.

Table 4: Usefulness of MPAT for improving management performance

In your opinion, how useful is MPAT as a tool for improving management performance in your department?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Completely useful	31.0%	22
Mostly useful	47.9%	34
Slightly useful	18.3%	13
Not at all useful	2.8%	2
answered question		71
skipped question		1

From the above results it is clear that those that feel MPAT is not useful are in the minority.

How MPAT is used is something that was explored in greater depth via the workshops and interviews. One identified use of MPAT was for awareness raising and information sharing at the senior management level.

For one respondent MPAT corroborates findings about management strengths and deficiencies identified in audit reports (Interview 30). In another instance, MPAT results are tabled at the EXCO and HOD Forum meetings, the top decision making structures. The results are used *“to inform improvement plans and sectoral/systemic strategies with a developmental focus to find out what support they require”* (Interview 14). Other examples of use included:

“...to make everyone know about the results and performance of the department, to communicate well what MPAT is.” (Interview 28)

“the ideology of MPAT is to sort out the compliance issues first. But on the utilisation, and using these results also an initiative was to present these results on a number of forum, ICT, supply chain, FOHOD with the understanding and trying to highlight these areas at relevant authority levels, to work on them and see how we can utilise these results.” (Interview 23)

“Other than causing temperature build up around non-compliance, it has created awareness around what should be done and what we are not doing.” (Interview 15)

“When the report comes, we have the DG Forum and we work out the plan on dealing with remarks and we help explain to the units. The team takes the feedback to the relevant branches.” (Interview 1)

There is some level of consensus among respondents that MPAT scores have raised awareness on getting the basics of management practice right. One respondent reflected that *“scores are shared with senior management in extended EXCO...The key point of MPAT is to improve service delivery...We didn’t have some compliance elements in place, some things were not signed-off. We’ve picked up issues of non-compliance and improved and we are one finding away from a completely clean audit” (Interview 45).*

Another important use of MPAT results is for accountability. There were a variety of interpretations of how this occurs, but the most tangible example is in codified agreements or performance as was reported by some departments. The following quotes apply:

“Some branches have reflected indicators relating to MPAT in the APP and performance agreements are starting to reflect MPAT. (Focus Group 9)

“In the last 2 year we have improved but we can do more. I’ve put it in the manager’s performance agreements. Every manager has to do monitoring and evaluation and it has been cascaded down. The senior management level must account. It can’t just [be] embedded at the DG level.” (Interview 1)

“The results have been used to improve things in the organisation, for the first time MPAT scores are related to performance bonuses in 2013/14.” (Focus Group 10)

The open and public nature of the MPAT results has also introduced a transparency that can be both self-reflective and induced. The following graph presents summarised rankings by province with national departments for MPAT 1.2 and 1.3, as presented and discussed at the Portfolio Committee on Public Administration and Planning, Monitoring & Evaluation (DPME, 2014). This degree of scrutiny is another indication of use, and one that has important implications for accountability, as discussed below.

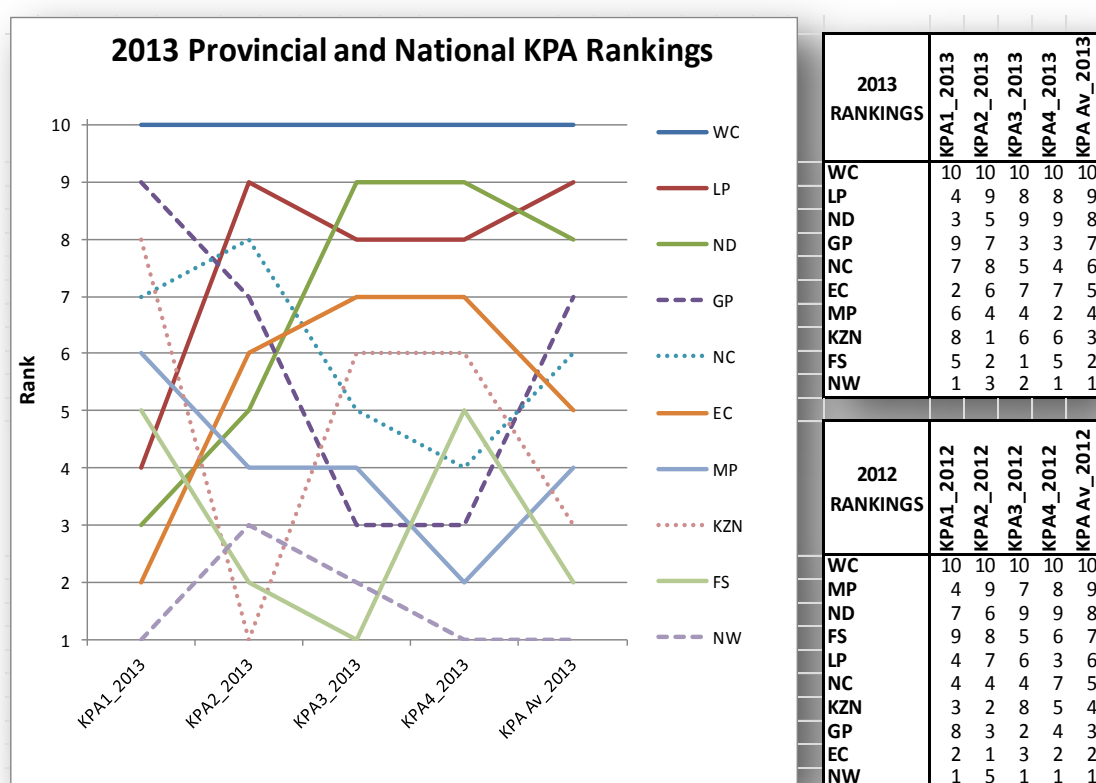


Figure 25: MPAT ranking results from 2013 and 2012 (DPME, 2014).

For instance, one respondent indicated that the department “*names and shames in the DG’s Forum*” and went on to also note that MPAT has raised the levels of accountability in the department (Interview 46). Another group indicated that the results are used “*as a stick*” (Focus Group 15) to punish parts of the departments that are non-compliant with MPAT. Others expressed reactions to the release of results:

“[W]hen [the] scores were released I felt like hiding I was so embarrassed.”(Interview 40)

“...it is taken very seriously and when results are low there are a lot of questions from DG”. (Interview 4)

“[Leadership asked] why you are red and an amber; what are you doing about it?” (Interview 40)

This kind of use inevitably has knock-on effects that speak to actual improvements and reflection around management practices. The following quotes illustrate this:

“[We] strive for an improvement and therefore develop the improvement plan in place, but also introspection and some discussion of some of the things that need to be measured and where it is lacking we bring our own standards into play.” (Interview 25)

“We act on the recommendation and if we have not scored a 4, we look at the assessment and try to address this. We take the responsibility and do not wait for the boss to decide on what is actually needed.” (Focus Group 32)

“The results are used in the sense that we are able to know and understand, give a self-reflection and identify gaps and through improvement plan and strive towards closing those gaps to ensure the organisation abilities to deliver on its duties. The scores in the province are largely used to analyse results to see the gaps and improve on them.” (Interview 39)

“MPAT has helped us to get the basics right. In government we have an HR that is transactional – leave form, payslip, we sign you in when you come in but we said HR needs to move higher up. We were doing things that were not documented and MPAT has helped us because we are a department with young people and they are mobile.” (Interview 6)

While the aforementioned are clear indications of use, there were also concerns expressed about limitations to the use of results and misrepresentations of the results. The following explains:

“In general what worries me the most about MPAT and the likes of MPAT is how deep does it go? If it lacks depth, [we are] just doing window dressing.” (Interview 47)

“the reds give the department of lot of stress, this is where some of the problems lie and need more attention than other areas. Although even if improvement is desired, at times there aren’t enough resources to efficiently initiate improvement. There are things that our department knows that they will never, ever achieve.” (Focus Group 24)

However, in other instances people noted the communication and relevance deficit within their respective departments. One participant reflected on the challenge of educating staff about MPAT, indicating that there is a risk that MPAT *“might be known only at that level [executive and senior management] and not the entire department”* (Interview 28). Not everyone involved in MPAT knows how the results are used by the departments as this respondent stated, *“My report goes to my supervisor. And I don’t know what the experience is after that.”* (Interview 36)

Other respondents indicated that they still didn’t feel MPAT influenced their work substantively in part because of a lack of formalised accountability.

“MPAT doesn’t make difference for the department. It is not in our performance agreements.” (Focus Group 34)

Others indicated that despite communication of results and the perceptions associated with underperformance, relevance continued to be questioned:

"I asked them 'If you did an exam and got 50% how would you feel?' We want to become an employer of choice. MPAT comes up in the media, and we are in the bottom 25%. These communication opportunities matter. It is not seen as strategic and it could be strategic. It's not that the top management doesn't support it but don't see it as their core business." (Interview 50)

"We have difficulty persuading people to incorporate these into their daily activities. The coordinators are junior managers; the senior managers don't have buy in at executive level." (Focus Group 3)

"No MEC wants to be fired by it. However, the scores are not talking to what is happening on the ground." (Interview 48)

Respondents also offered considerable insight into the potential for the tool, and some of the conditions that could spur on more effective use. For instance, a focus group felt that in order for the tool to add more value internally, there needs to be stronger leadership to effectively execute the use of the scores to senior management for real traction and change (Focus Group 29). Another expressed it as *"the link of MPAT and strategic planning in the department needs to be strengthened"* (Focus Group 27). The following quotes identified some areas of need for further use:

"I believe we can benefit more from the results... The focus is on extent to which implement policy of transformation of service delivery. Going forward we can draw from what MPAT is saying and we can direct our interactions with provinces and national departments more." (Interview 8)

"We need to have a way to infuse it to individual managers and also in the performance contracts." (Interview 17)

4.3.4 Learning

Facilitated horizontal learning stands out as one of the key steps in the results chain expected to deliver MPAT's intended outcomes. However, the extent to which learning occurs, and the platforms for it, tends to be variable.

Many respondents indicated that the launch events and workshops hosted by DPME have assisted them in implementing MPAT in the departments as intended, but there was an expressed need for more opportunities of this nature. A number of officials had attended one or more MPAT launches over the 4 years the process has been in place. The most recent launch was

described as particularly useful. Officials noted these workshops and learning events provided for much engagement before starting the new cycle of the tool and also allowed for debates to occur about MPAT issues (Focus Group 23).

The MPAT launches *“have been useful to help understand more on the information on best practices and also tap into that on sharing information”* (Interview 4). The launch and workshops provide the opportunity for *“sharing from other departments and sector involvement to see what others are doing and contact those who did well on the particular standard that you want to tackle...”* (Interview 14)

Widespread appreciation was expressed for the launches and the training on the ICT platform, standards and the challenge process. One focus group indicated it was useful to have commissions for different KPAs, to unpack as a province the challenges being experienced and engage with guidance on the evidence that could be useful (Focus Group 1). This issue was picked up by another focus group which explained how their province breaks up into working groups according to KPAs where concerns were raised like pay sheet issues so that *“as a province then we could deal with how to manage some of the issues”* (Focus Group 4).

However, a complaint was raised by an official who felt that *the “workshops are minimal. Too many people attended the workshop and were sent away. Need more workshops. Need to cascade skills down”* (Focus Group 23). To compensate for this some departments have embarked on their own learning initiatives. Further, through internal training, some departments have shifted attitudes of managers to embrace MPAT and improve management practice. One respondent reports that *“attitudes have changed through training and holding people by hand”* both at Head Office and in the parts of the department (Interview 1).

Other areas where there is a need for improvement on training includes the need for training on how to handle the improvement plan, *“to engage with the departments doing well and assist those where they can improve”* (Interview 28). In other cases calls for the training on the ICT platform were made with the one proposal for *“a live training process throughout the year”* rather than *“[W]eb based training squashed in before the launch”* (Interview 14).

In a few instances there were also concerns expressed about the distinctions being made between what constitutes standard practices and best practices that lead to good performance. In particular, a risk was raised of conflating basic practice standards (as per level 3 ratings) with best practice (Interview 14). The following quotes also address this:

“Good to discuss what is really good practice, what identified as good practice, not always so. Some of the initial good practices, the first set, were not really good practice; they were things we should be doing as basics. The identification of good practice has improved.” (Interview 3)

“Best practices are not standard practices, must not conflate the two.” (Focus Group 2)

Another theme that came across in respondent feedback was the value of peer-to-peer engagement, and the appropriateness of contextual comparisons as it pertained to learning. A participant stated that how to get to level 4 should be demystified and that investigating how one department may assist another to achieve is more appropriate. Within this same focus group another issue emerged that there is more value in comparing and engaging like vs like, one of the ‘big’ or service delivery departments would like to see how other ‘big’ or service delivery departments do things. This department would like to compare itself to its direct equivalent in other provincial and national departments (Focus Group 1) and there are currently insufficient opportunities to do so.

4.3.5 Perspectives on management performance results

While individual and group reflections are not considered a particularly reliable reflection on actual performance results, some of the high level reflections on its results are telling for what it says about distinctions between management performance and compliance to management practice standards:

“I am concerned that MPAT which was designed as a tool to assist management to improve our performance as management is becoming a compliance matter, that requires a quite intense amount of work by teams that are already being audited by Internal Audit, and AGSA. This may be felt more acutely in a very small department where some of the functions are in fact the responsibility of one or two people.” (Survey Respondent 3)

“There is insufficient emphasis on measuring the actual performance of departments - MPAT measures just compliance, so the message we are getting is that compliance is more important than delivering results.” (Survey Respondent 21)

“MPAT looks at compliance and the final results provide a helicopter view of what is happening in departments in terms of compliance.” (Interview 5)

“I think is time to move beyond compliance to actual implementation of the various plans and policies in the next cycle.” (Survey Respondent 58)

Another respondent took this further to highlight what was interpreted as a breakdown of the MPAT programme theory in terms of contributing to management performance, and ultimately, service delivery results:

“The public in terms of the results of MPAT should be very happy or at least content with the performance of government, yet the converse holds true. For example, service delivery protests have increased in spite of MPAT precisely because MPAT is process driven and not focusing on resolving issues on the ground. Communities are feeling that they are not engaged or at least listened to on issues affecting them. The MPAT has not resolved these problems. It has rather caused us to spend more time chasing paper which is what Political leadership say that we are complying on paper but the people out there have a different lived experience.”
(Survey Respondent 61)

However, there are also positive reflections on the results of the intervention as it pertains to management performance. The following quote best captures this sentiment:

“As a fledgling HOD appointed in 2013, the tool has been crucial in assisting me to make an overall assessment of the department and use this as a guideline to improve systems, policies and plans. It has also been useful in setting targets for the overall improvement of the department.”
(Survey Respondent 40)

4.3.6 Correlation analyses

Human Resource Management

There is an assumption that an improvement in MPAT scores results in some kind of improvement in management performance. For example, it is assumed that as a department improves in the HRM elements of the MPAT its performance in achieving HRM objectives will be commensurate. Based on the posited theory of change, in looking at all of these areas of HR, namely HR planning, organisational design, the HR development plan, pay sheet certification, recruitment and retention, etc, one would expect a strong relationship with management diversity and within the external variables such as % of female staff, % of disabled staff, vacancy rates and the average duration to fill a post.

The relationship between the HRM KPA and the comprising standards that share similar content areas with the available externally collected indicators, mentioned above, has been analysed. The table below looks at the correlation values against each standard. A coefficient correlation looks at measuring how well a regression equation truly represents a given data set. The correlation

coefficient, r , is also known as a linear correlation coefficient, measuring the strength and direction of a linear relationship between two variables. It should be noted that in statistics, a correlation greater than 0.8 is generally described as very strong, whereas a correlation less than 0.5 is described as weak.

In the table below one can see the representation of the coefficients ranging between $-1 \leq r \leq +1$.

Table 5: Correlations between KPA 3 standards and external variables

	% Female	% Disabled	Vacancy rate	Average months to fill posts
3.1.1 HR Planning	0.0087	0.1204	-0.1290	-0.0516
3.1.2 Organisational Design	0.0241	0.1776	-0.0640	-0.1500
3.1.3 HR Development Plan	0.0034	-0.0711	-0.0668	-0.0207
3.2.2 Recruitment & Retention	-0.1249	-0.0368	-0.0064	-0.0689
3.2.4 Management of Diversity	-0.0846	0.1198	0.0234	-0.0192

It should be noted that these indicators should only be compared with standards 3.1.1., 3.1.2., 3.1.3., and 3.2.2 since there is a plausible relationship with these in which the posited theory of change suggests that where there is good management practice as assessed by MPAT, there would be better management performance using the four selected indicators.

In looking at the analysis it is evident that there are not any particularly strong relationships that stand out at this time. For instance, there is little or no relationship between standard 3.1.2 Organisational Design and % disabled, which measured 0.17. There is also an insignificant negative correlation between standard 3.2.2 Recruitment and Retention at -0.03 where a strong relationship would be assumed. This is similar to the correlation in standard 3.1.1 HR Planning and vacancy rates. Although there are consistent negative correlations to average months to fill posts against all the selected HR standards in the table above (as would be expected given that a decrease in turnaround time is the intended outcome), these relationships are not particularly strong. However, one needs to treat these findings with caution given the time lags between management practice and performance in the results-chain as well as concerns about how timeous the performance data used for the comparison is.

It should be noted from the statistical analysis produced by the University of Witwatersrand that “there are indeed significant indications that compliance and performance do, in certain respects, go together (This is of course not

contending that compliance leads to performance; one may surmise that both are outcome of sound leadership, management and system)” (Wits, 2014: 19). An interesting correlation analysis to consider is when there is no linear relationship as in a Spearman correlation. This is able to show a monotonic relationship that shows the imperfect notion of a Pearson correlation. With that in mind, a Spearman correlation will have a correlation of 0.22 with % disability by virtue of evaluating an ordinal variable (Wits, 2014:19). This however is still a weak correlation.

Changes in MPAT Standard Scores and AG Findings

There is significant overlap between some of the MPAT standards and the requirements that departments have to fulfill for the Auditor General of South Africa. These cover the Financial Management KPA and the Human Resources Management KPA particularly, but do also touch on the Strategic Management KPA and Governance and Accountability KPA. Some of the similar standards are outlined in the table below:

Table 6: MPAT Standard alignment with corresponding AG standards

<i>MPAT Standard</i>	<i>Corresponding AG Standards</i>
1.1.1 Strat Plans	Strategic Planning and Performance Management
1.1.2 Annual Performance Plans	Strategic Planning and Performance Management
3.1.1 HR Planning	HR Management; Human Resources Management and Compensation
3.1.3 HR Development Plan	HR Management;
3.2.1 Pay Sheet Certification	Human Resources Management and Compensation
3.2.2 Recruitment and Retention Strategy	Human Resources Management and Compensation
4.1.2 Acquisition Management	Unauthorised, irregular as well as fruitless and wasteful expenditure
4.2.1 Cash Flow	Expenditure; Expenditure Management
4.2.2 Payment of Suppliers	Expenditure Management
4.2.3 Unauthorised, irregular, fruitless and wasteful expenditure	Unauthorised, irregular, fruitless and wasteful expenditure

Based on the posited theory of change for MPAT, one would expect that improvements in the MPAT standard scores would have a positive correlation with improvements in certain AG findings as they pertain to administrative and management performance.

Looking at the change in results in these standards from the MPAT 1.2 to MPAT 1.3 and from the 2011/12 to 2012/13 financial years there appears to be some correlation in the movement of some of the standards. If one looks at the average score of all departments for each type of audit finding in a particular area, it shows that there might be some correlation between AG findings and MPAT scores in the Strategic Management and Financial Management KPAs, though this is not a particularly strong correlation. See the appendix for a more detailed analysis. Further to this issue, the seemingly tenuous relationship in some instances has given rise to concerns regarding the value of MPAT. The following quotes explain:

“The MPAT and the AG results are sometimes inconsistent and this creates confidence challenges with the performance of departments. DPME does not seem to appreciate this. They always have an explanation that appears at least at face value to defend the MPAT.”
(Survey Respondent 61)

“...it is amazing that A-G findings sometimes are in direct contrast to MPAT results, which indicate a degree of malicious compliance in MPAT report filling. Perhaps there is a case to do other forms of verification.”
(Survey Respondent 11)

KPAs and the AG Outcomes

Comparing the average scores of departments in MPAT 1.3 and the AG's findings for the corresponding financial year, 2012/13 suggests that there is limited correlation between the MPAT scores for each of the KPAs.

The Statistical Appendix to DPME's Report on the State of Management Practices in the Public Services argues that the most comparable MPAT KPAs to the AG's findings are the Human Resources KPA 3 and the Financial Management KPA 4 and that KPA 1 and 2 filter into these. Comparing KPA average scores for all departments achieving each audit outcomes shows that there is some correlation between the results. The possible audit outcomes are an adverse finding or a disclaimer (amalgamated for the purposes of this analysis), a qualified audit, an unqualified audit with findings and an unqualified audit with no findings (clean).

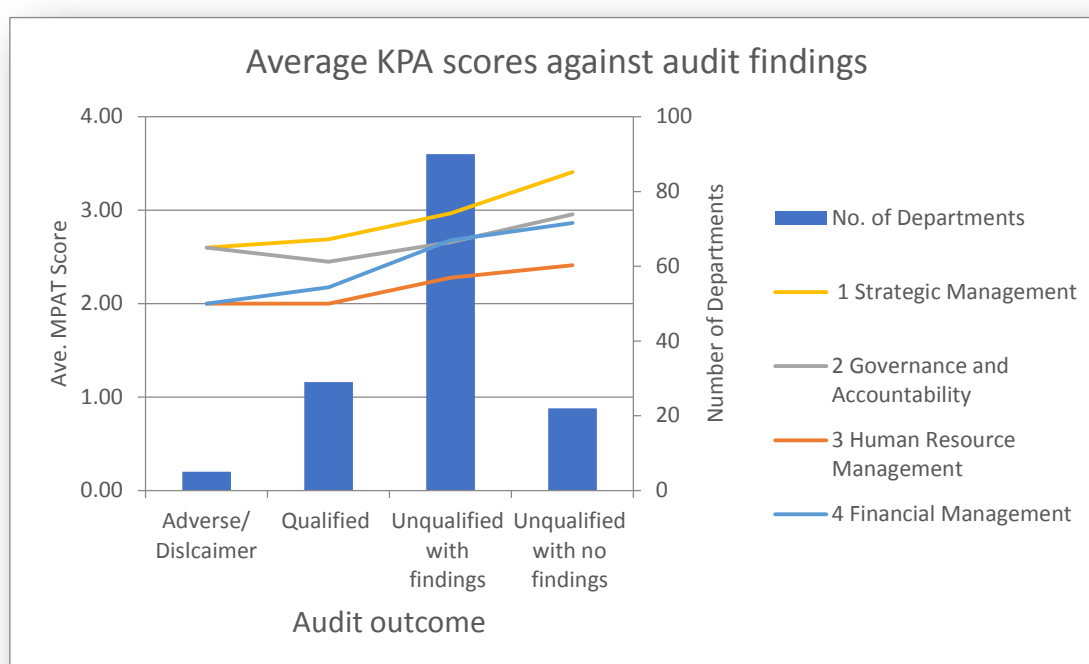


Figure 26: Average KPA scores in relation to audit findings

For KPA 1 the average score rises with the improved audit outcomes, from just over 2.5 for departments with an adverse finding or a disclaimer, to just under 3.5 for departments with a clean audit. This suggests a correlation between Strategic Management as measured by MPAT and the AG's findings. KPA 4 Financial Management also shows a clear correlation with the audit outcomes, with departments receiving an adverse finding or disclaimer averaging 2 for KPA 4 and those departments receiving a clean audit averaging just below 3. From this analysis there do not appear to be significant correlations between the KPA 2 Governance and Accountability and KPA 3 Human Resources Management. KPA's 2 and 4, however, incorporate the AG's findings into their scores, which increase the likelihood of a correlation in this analysis.

4.3.7 Synthesis

An integrated analysis of the sub-criteria of effectiveness yields both affirming and concerning findings with regards to the extent to which MPAT has achieved its intended objectives. Beginning with MPAT's own data between 1.2 and 1.3, there is evidence of an overall net improvement on the standards, albeit uneven and with five standards indicating regression. Results are perceived as accurate to their intent by those ultimately responsible for using them, which is widely understood as compliance to management practice rather than performance.

Use of MPAT results tends to be distinguished between awareness raising and identification of problem areas, for accountability and for improvement. Of these potential uses there were common indications of institutionalised use,

particularly in the form of performance planning and agreements, as well as standing items of management meetings. Instances of the voluntary application of MPAT targets as personal and departmental accountability performance indicators were considered compatible with the self-reflective, developmental intent of the tool.

Respondents indicated the benefit of MPAT learning events and referred to the value of recent DPME coordinated launches and trainings as well as internal department initiatives. References to uptake and learning appeared most beneficial in relation to peer-to-peer, or department-to-department, comparisons that took account of similar conditions and contexts. There was a clear indication from qualitative data that the potential for learning has to be fully explored, especially as it pertains to the nuance of the tool and how learning from results can catalyse management performance improvements through the aforementioned uses.

The correlation analyses undertaken to test relationships between MPAT scores and indicators of management performance have not indicated particularly strong relationships as would have been expected given the theory of change. Although there is some evidence of these relationships between KPAs 1 and 4 with the audit outcomes, this is perhaps not as strong as would have been expected and some respondents highlight these inconsistencies when questioning MPAT's benefit. In the areas of governance and accountability and HRM, relationships appear particularly weak, if any. However, these findings need to also take cognisance of the delays and time lags both in the results-chain posited and the timeousness of the data as the possible effects take multiple cycles to be felt given the nature of bureaucracies and the magnitude of change.

Overall, it is found that there is evidence that management practices have undergone some improvements as per the intentions of the MPAT initiative, but this has not yet sufficiently reflected in tangible evidence of improvement in management performance.

5. Conclusions

5.1 To what extent is the design of MPAT appropriate to assess management performance, notably the four KPAs and the indicators that are being used?

5.1.1 Statement of purpose

While it is well known that the MPAT programme is designed to assess management performance (as evidenced by the research questions), there is an argument that this in fact assesses management practice as distinct from management performance itself. Further, it should locate its purpose in learning about and improvement of practices (as they contribute to performance) rather than just the assessment thereof. Assessment, in itself, is central, but insufficient to be meaningful in addressing our public management challenges. In the MPAT design there are traces of intention to use MPAT as a tool for exercising accountability, most notably through HoD performance appraisals.

There is a tension between the purposes of learning and improvement on one hand that of exercising supervisory accountability. MPAT and its core elements, most notably voluntary evidence-based self-assessment, do not have a good design fit with the exercise of accountability.

5.1.2 Sufficiency of KPAs

Reflecting against the international literature, there do appear to be some limitations with the sufficiency of MPAT's KPAs and standards. When compared with both a contemporary understanding of good public management and international public management assessment tools similar to MPAT (Canada, New Zealand, USA), critical focus areas such as information systems and asset management do not appear to be sufficiently catered for in the MPAT focus areas. That said, there was limited evidence from respondents that the design of the tool was any less appropriate or relevant for that matter. However, MPAT documentation itself does not sufficiently motivate the choice for the current KPAs. This is considered a weakness of the design.

The KPAs of Strategic Management and Governance and Accountability came in for the most substantial critique from MPAT participants in terms of design. KPA 1 is represented by a limited and arguably insufficient set of standards, focusing on process compliance in this area. The standards under governance also provide a skewed understanding of governance based on specific regulated requirements, while ignoring public participation and accountability, partnerships with other stakeholders. Respondents' were found to share some concerns over the composition of KPA 2, although the overall perception results indicate that there is broad endorsement of the current design.

5.1.3 Validity and sufficiency of standards and refinement mechanisms

Not all standards are validated and there is no clear mechanism to refine these, despite the fact that DPME has appeared responsive to shortcomings on formulation of standards and open to refinement. The compliance standards are only as good as the policies that require them. It is important that findings from MPAT are used to review policies that underpin standards. Such mechanisms are currently not catered for.

There is a case to be made that the standards may have higher relevance for particular departments, depending on whether additional KPAs and standards are introduced. This is not conclusive but remains to be tested.

5.1.4 Conflation of management practice and performance

The current design does not sufficiently differentiate between management practice and management performance, as the two are arguably quite different but seemingly conflated in the conceptualisation and design of the existing MPAT theory of change. As defined earlier, management practice speaks to compliance with existing standards (often around legislation, policies, systems etc), but does not necessarily equate to good management performance, a point regularly voiced by MPAT participants across national and provincial departments. The theory of change that exists between management practice and management performance is insufficiently tested (in part because of a dearth of representative performance data!) and assumed as true. Despite this difference, the formulation of KPA standards emphasise management practice, while claiming to provide standard indications of management performance. This differentiation has important implications for the overall programme design and outcomes.

The underlying rationale for MPAT sets out better management performance as a precursor to better departmental performance. How exactly better management performance translates to better departmental performance in terms of service delivery terms is not particularly well explained, nor what evidence links the collective management achievement of the KPAs to departmental performance. While examining linkages to departmental performance outcomes is beyond the scope of this implementation evaluation, how this is conceptualised is important to the overall design and it appears to be lacking at this time.

5.1.5 Insufficient horizontal learning in design

There is an implicit assumption around the horizontal learning that occurs between departments following the MPAT assessment process. The opportunity to compare, contrast and learn from the differences and best practices between

departments is something that is currently not well documented and for which there is demand from departments. Thus, the lack of affirmation of the opportunity and value of peer-to-peer learning between departments would seem to be a shortcoming of the current design particularly as it lends itself to being one of the mechanisms for catalysing management performance.

5.1.6 Insufficient support in producing improvement plans

Conducting the assessment and identifying areas in need of improvement is helpful insofar as those areas receive the support and managers learn what can be done better after they find out what's wrong. The transversal departments that were involved in the MPAT design carry considerable influence and expertise in this regard, but it is not clear to what extent they are intended to assist in the development of improvement plans or provide hands-on support, as well as the resource implications for this. There was a clear indication from departments that transversal support is not satisfactory in all instances, particularly from DPSA. Clarity on the kind of support and expertise available to assist with the improvement plans, as well as the procedures for accessing that assistance, could be better documented.

Summary

While MPAT intends to be designed for assessing management performance, in reality it is a sophisticated, nuanced, compliance assessment of management practice, comparable with the best known international practice. Its design is limited by

- an emphasis on the purpose of assessment rather than the purpose of improvement,
- a conceptual conflation of management practice and performance, a distinction which is key to its purpose and useful implementation
- insufficient KPAs to fully address the contemporary public management challenge particularly when considering the importance of managing and maintaining assets well, and ensuring the best use of information systems
- imbalance in the measures and composition of standards in KPA 1 and 2
- inadequate mechanisms for :
 - horizontal learning and improvement
 - support by relevant transversal departments
 - responsive refinement of the standards for validity and sufficiency
 - review and refinement of public management policies that underpin the standards

5.2 Which other tools in the public service are assessing the same areas/standards as MPAT? What is the extent of the similarities, differences and the correlation (if any) of the MPAT results and is MPAT sourcing appropriately the data from other departments for its 4 KPAs?

The most frequently compared and referenced tool or process being used to assess similar areas to MPAT is conducted through the annual AG audits. There is a fair amount of duplication and overlap with aspects of the AG audits, while AG outcomes are considered as an outcome indicator related to management performance. Despite this relationship and apparent congruence between certain MPAT standards and areas of AG findings, the actual correlations are not particularly strong.

National Treasury's FMCMM is considered to be compliance driven and towards accounting practice, thereby missing the broad range of management practices MPAT addresses. And while DPSA's organisational functionality assessment does take a broader look at the systems, policies and procedures in place, it is largely and diagnostic for an intervention rather than a regular means assessing management practice.

To the extent that there is accurate, reliable, representative and updated management performance data currently available, there have been attempts to incorporate and use it although incompleteness has been an issue. HRM and Finance Management performance indicators are the most developed in this regard but more appropriate performance measures need to be found for KPA 1 and 2.

5.3 What is working well and what is not working well with MPAT and the process used?

5.3.1 Widely supported

Although MPAT is only 4 years old, it is a successful programme of public management assessment, taken seriously by its participants and valued by its stakeholders. This includes officials, managers and importantly accounting officers. Heads of Departments and Directors-General value and support the MPAT assessment and there is significant evidence of internal use and incorporation into improvement planning. It generally enjoys leadership support and has been most successful when leaders own and champion the process, and management is given the space to be proactive in utilising the results. Participation is effectively 100% in government, as required by a cabinet resolution, which does raise the concern of malicious compliance potentially undermining the learning and improvement intentions.

5.3.2 Transparency

MPAT is significantly designed to be predictable and transparent. Participating departments can clearly understand their scoring, except for some reservations regarding the moderation process, discussed later. The results of MPAT are made public. While there is some fear amongst participants about being seen to be not performing or not complying with MPAT, the transparency is a key success factor for MPAT. It ensures that MPAT is seen as a credible and fair assessment tool.

5.3.3 Partnership

The institutional arrangements that include primary partnerships with DPME, DPSA and National Treasury, on the whole enrich the content of the MPAT assessment, although there are clearly some perceived duplications and redundancies by participants. Co-ordination and integration between DPME and DPSA specifically could be improved, especially as it pertains to the role of DPSA as custodian of Human Resource Management and Governance and the support it provides to processes in these performance areas.

5.3.4 Responsive to improving MPAT assessment

DPME has been noted to be responsive to feedback on MPAT. Whether this has to do with the available tools and infrastructure, moderation and the challenges process, or addressing and revising standards, there is evidence that feedback is actioned, particularly where standards are problematic and need refinement. If within the scope of DPME, feedback is incorporated into the next year's assessment tools and the intervention is incrementally corrected.

5.4 Areas where MPAT is not working well:

5.4.1 Timing

The timing of MPAT was raised as a constraint. Departments are given 1 month to collect evidence, conduct a self-assessment and submit these. Departments felt this timeline was particularly tight, especially in light of the technological challenges that follow. Further, the lag between when self-assessments are undertaken and when in the annual cycle the MPAT results become available is another issue. This limited the meaningful incorporation of MPAT assessments into improvement planning.

5.4.2 Technology

There were significant complaints that the web-based software system developed by DPME functioned poorly and could not handle the traffic at the time of submission. It was agreed that this is the most appropriate medium for submission, but the particular solution adopted by DPME was problematic due

to technological capacity challenges compounded by the window of time for submission.

5.4.3 Moderation & challenge process

In terms of the phases of the MPAT processes, moderation was consistently identified as the weakest point. While the initial design of the MPAT process proposed moderation by subject matter experts, the implementation of MPAT has pragmatically transitioned to a form of moderation by representative peers, rather than experts, where departments assign internal 'experts' who, together with officials acting as the 'experts' from partner organisations to provide policy advice and clarity. This has resulted departments questioning the expertise of the moderators, and their exercise of power to moderate.

The opportunity to utilise comments to substantiate moderation is not well used, defaulting to standardised drop-down box moderation comments. There is evidence of widespread perceptions that moderators were not sufficiently qualified to play the moderator role, were inconsistent and untransparent and could not sufficiently account for their moderation. Moderation is the only part of the process where the credibility of MPAT has been questioned.

There was noted tension between the role of internal audit in departments and that of moderators, with internal audit questioning the relevance of their role in verifying and approving self-assessments. While there may be justification for two separate roles, clarification is certainly necessary.

It also appears that evidence is not fully utilised in the moderation process as the amount of evidence is overwhelming and not prudently and strategically requested.

5.4.4 Resourcing MPAT

DPME has clearly built a unique contingent of skilled and experienced managers for MPAT. Partner departments have limited resourcing to which they can allocate towards MPAT by comparison.

The significant resourcing of DPME with financial and human resources to enable all MPAT processes, is not commensurately reflected in partner departments, and OtPs that have a devolved responsibility in managing MPAT at a provincial level.

5.4.5 Knowledge sharing and learning

While there have been recent attempts at sharing knowledge and best practice identified in MPAT, most noted in the launch events of MPAT 1.4, arguably the opportunity to realise this objective has not received the attention it deserves.

Many participants were unaware of learning events outside the launch events and would value participating in thematic learning events.

5.4.6 Support from transversal departments

If certain goals are improvements in performance, through addressing challenges identified in the MPAT assessment, then transversal departments have an important support role in guiding and assisting departments to achieve the desired levels of performance. While support by National Treasury outside the MPAT process is noted, there is a weakness in support provided by DPSA. The MPAT process does not take responsibility for ensuring that departments are sufficiently supported by transversal custodian departments in addressing shortcomings.

5.4.7 Policy Review and Refinement

Problems related to the standards are not necessarily confined to the formulation of the standards, but may relate to the relevance and practicality of policy requirements. The analysis has shown no substantive evidence of a relationship between management standards and management performance, within the limitations of data availability on management performance. This does question the validity, or sufficiency of at least some of the management standards. If MPAT incorporates all relevant policy requirements relating to public management, irrespective of its validity & sufficiency, then there must be a mechanism to test the validity & sufficiency of policy requirements with the intention of transparent analysis, dialogue and policy refinement in the public management realm.

MPAT has no formal mechanism to trigger or engender policy review of public management requirements.

5.4.8 Accountability for performance

While there was a design intention to hold departments and HoDs in particular accountable for departmental performance on MPAT through HoD performance appraisals this has not happened formally or consistently in practice. That said, strengthened accountability mechanisms in MPAT combined with the Cabinet resolution making it a policy requirement have the potential to undermine its voluntary self-assessment, learning and improvement nature.

It is therefore appropriate that explicit requirements or linkages to HoD performance appraisals have not been pursued, as the voluntary adoption of MPAT standards appears more desirable.

5.5 Is there evidence that national and provincial departments have improved their management practices as a result of the MPAT process? If so, to what extent has this happened?

Standards

Year on year comparison of ratings on MPAT shows some evidence of improvements between MPAT 1.2 and 1.3. Of the 29 standards applied across the two cycles, 24 standards saw a net improvement in scores while 5 standards saw a net regression. Stated differently, 39% of MPAT 1.3 ratings were an improvement on 1.2, while a similar amount maintained the same level (37%), and 23% deteriorated. When considering the net improvement with the insights gained from the qualitative data, it can be cautiously stated that there is evidence of uneven improvements in management practices. Whether these can be causally attributed to MPAT cannot be conclusively determined based on this evaluation design.

Management performance

The intention of MPAT is to improve management performance. While there is a shortage of available data on aspects of management performance respective to the scope of MPAT, the analyses undertaken did not reveal any evidence to indicate that there had been, as yet, a commensurate improvement in management performance. While qualitative data provides some evidence of purported management performance improvement, respondents tended to emphasise improvements in relation to compliance with management practices, rather than performance. There is likely to be a lag between achievement of MPAT standards and resultant improvement in management performance. This makes the collection of longitudinal and appropriate data on management performance key to assessing MPAT's success.

5.6 Which public service institutions are using the MPAT results? How are they utilising them and what are the benefits?

5.6.1 Departments as users:

Evidence shows that 97.8% of accounting officers surveyed consider MPAT results to be useful to some extent. Departments tend to utilise these results for raising awareness of management practice strengths and weaknesses, accountability as well as for undertaking improvements and corrections. MPAT results are often considered in conjunction with Audit Outcomes to pinpoint weaknesses in management and administrative practice. Improvement plans are the means through which improvements are often made, whether in separate plans or through the integration with existing planning. Some departments have included MPAT targets in their APPs, as well as introduced it into the performance agreements of senior managers. In other instances, MPAT

related undertakings have become standing items on senior management and accounting officer meeting agendas, thereby institutionalising the improvement emphasis.

5.6.2 CoG departments as users:

There is evidence that some OtPs have taken the lead by using MPAT results to coordinate and drive improvements in management practice throughout their provinces, although this is not in all cases and would appear dependent on OtP capacity. The shared corporate services model would seem to introduce a unique opportunity that better positions the OtPs to manage improvements and take the lead.

DPME has used MPAT results to continuously improve and adapt its role as custodian of government planning, monitoring and evaluation. This has included pioneering other tools modelled on MPAT at the local government level and in relation to performance monitoring and evaluation.

There is limited evidence that DPSA or National Treasury are using the results to target interventions or provided individual departmental support in the process of undertaking improvements except where specifically requested.

5.6.3 Legislatures as users:

At this time there is little evidence presented to suggest that legislatures are meaningfully using MPAT as part of their oversight responsibilities. This may be beneficial as such oversight could undermine the voluntary design intentions and the learning and improvement element.

5.7 How can MPAT (the framework and tool) be strengthened or changed to improve the attainment of its intended objective?

The above question is addressed in the following section on recommendations.

6. Recommendations

The overarching recommendation is to continue with this useful, well-supported and popular programme and build on the energy and momentum it has developed. The following set of recommendations is proposed in the light of this overarching recommendation:

Programme Design Recommendations

Improve on the successful design of MPAT core elements by:

- 1. Clarify the nature of MPAT as a programme, together with its ownership and key role-players.** Although designed as a tool by DPME in consultation with key stakeholders, this evaluation has clarified and tested the intervention's implementation as a programme. MPAT is more than just a tool, but part of a coordinated, recurring intervention with clear objectives for management performance. It is important that the programmatic nature of MPAT is made explicit, and that the roles and responsibilities of MPAT managers, together with key stakeholders, are clearly defined and acknowledged.
- 2. Clarify the distinction between management practice and management performance.** In its key conceptual documents MPAT must distinguish cleanly between the concepts of management practice, management performance and service delivery performance, while articulating the relationship (or theory of change) between these. For clarity in its scope, it clearly needs to articulate whether it will focus on management practice or management performance, or both. It is recommended that MPAT focus on both management practice and management performance and on the tenuous relationship between the two.
- 3. Clarify and define the purpose of MPAT as supporting learning and improvement within departments and across government.** DPME must clearly articulate the overall purpose of the intervention (as distinct from MPAT the tool). It has been conceptualised here as a programme of which the tool is one component and thus clarity needs to be provided as to whether the programme exists:
 - to assess management practice and performance, or
 - to *ensure learning and improvement* in management performance (using the assessment of management practices and performance), or
 - to *ensure accountability* for management performance.

It is recommended that the purpose of MPAT should be to support learning and improvement within departments and across government by regularly assessing management practice and performance.

4. **The focus areas and standards of MPAT should be reviewed.** The current KPAs should be expanded to adequately address asset management and information management, two components of the public management picture not sufficiently catered for, when considered against international good practice or current challenges.
5. **The MPAT design and programme theory should emphasise horizontal learning and knowledge sharing as a key mechanism of change.** This emphasis could contribute to MPAT programme managers taking clear responsibility for convening and facilitating events where departments can learn from each other across the country, focussing on officials specialising in each KPA.
6. **The support roles and responsibilities that partner departments play in terms of the development and implementation of departmental improvement plans should be clarified.** MPAT programme coordinators should take responsibility for ensuring that partner departments accept and fulfil support provision roles.
7. **MPAT programme design should explicitly cater for the ongoing review of standards and underlying policy.** The MPAT programme design should explicitly cater for the ongoing refinement of standards and a periodic review or evaluation of policies that underpin the standards. A proposed amended theory of change is attached as a recommendation.

System Development Recommendations

Assuming agreement with the above conceptual recommendations the following system development changes are recommended.

8. **The MPAT intervention should be augmented to include a monitoring system on management performance indicators.** The data should be regularly assembled and collated from secondary data on management performance or the collection of appropriate management performance data from departments themselves should be introduced.

This data will not only allow analysis of the relationship between management practice and management performance, but further contribute to a rationalisation of management practices through demonstrable impact on management performance and service delivery.

9. The current KPAs and standards should be scrutinised and re-crafted using focus groups of expert officials:

- The standards should reflect valid management practices, distinct from management performance
- Each standard should be accompanied by an intervention logic that articulates and preferably maps its relationship with management performance and service delivery performance.
- Level 4 scoring in particular, for each standard must be clarified, in a context where management performance is assessed separately and not conflated, such as in the current standard on payment of suppliers.

10. The scheduling of MPAT processes should be predictable and allow departments adequate time for self-assessment, uploading and submission and for results to most effectively inform improvement planning. The timing of the release of results should be predictable so that departments can make provision for taking into account their results in routine planning. Consider developing an annual, medium-term MPAT workflow schedule to allow for proper planning.

11. The MPAT web-based system should be improved in terms of ease of access, duration of availability and capacity of traffic volumes before the next round. An independent IT diagnostic should be undertaken to determine the scope and system requirements necessary to withstand the demand of the MPAT programme. All users should be adequately trained on the system prior to its annual opening.

12. The moderation process should be revised to ensure a commonly agreed level of moderator expertise or experience. Further, the benefits of the involvement of internal audit should be synergised with the moderation process and this may require revisiting the definition and purpose of internal audit in the MPAT process.

13. A formal procedure and tracking system for handling all moderation challenges received should be implemented with provisions for direct engagement where feasible and appropriate.

14. A mechanism should be put in place for the regular review or evaluation of policies included in MPAT. In the Canadian MAF, policies are reviewed every 5 years based on trends in MAF data. It will be important to establish an appropriate structure assigned with the authority. It may be useful to consider a technical committee under the G&A cluster to be established to commission studies or evaluations into the effectiveness of public management requirements periodically and refer respective departments to improve regulatory policies.

This structure should have a mandate to co-ordinate data on management performance, regularly. An annual analytical report on relationships between compliance and management performance should be produced.

- 15. A longitudinal impact study should be undertaken to evaluate the relationship between MPAT standards, management performance and service delivery performance.** While there are limitations on conducting this study across government, due to government departments having different service delivery mandates, it is most conducive over a sample of departments with similar service delivery mandates, comparable contexts and established bodies of performance information (e.g provincial departments of Health & Education). This could provide for the basis of an impact evaluation of MPAT, but also long-term impact monitoring.

Institutional Arrangement Recommendations

- 16. A new charter or MOU should be developed between the partners, based on a review of partnership arrangements.** Guided by any adjustments to the conceptualisation of the focus areas and standards of MPAT, the partners should consider augmentation to include the custodians of new KPA's or standards, where appropriate.
- 17. A structure to co-ordinate the partnership that manages MPAT should be formalised, with a terms of reference.** In line with the aforementioned MOU, a formal structure that meets regularly, with clear responsibilities should be institutionalised between partner departments.
- 18. Partner departments should take on the role of providing improvement support..** This should be monitored annually and reviewed.
- 19. Multi-departmental, multi-sphere funding for this cross-cutting programme across partner departments should be considered.** The growing role of partners, including that of OtPs, needs to be accommodated in the funding of MPAT. An appropriate grant is one option.

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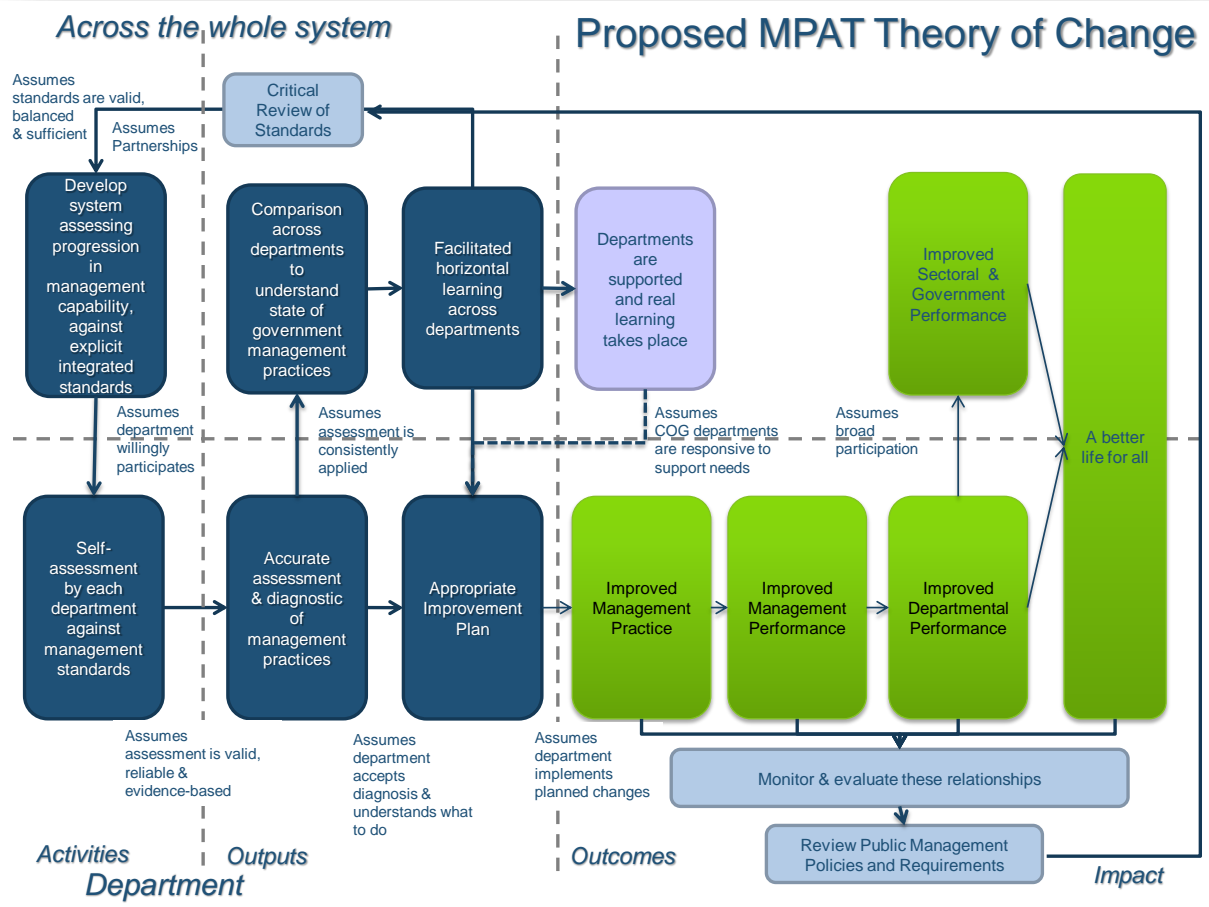
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Appendix A: Revised Theory of Change



Appendix B: Evaluation matrix

The table provides a breakdown of the evaluation analysis plan in relation to each of the evaluation questions, detailing the methodology that will be used and the data sources that will be utilised to produce evidence in relation to each of the evaluation questions, as aligned to the evaluation criteria.

Table 7: Evaluation matrix

<i>Evaluation question (Criteria)</i>	<i>Methodology</i>	<i>Data sources</i>
(ii) To what extent is the design of MPAT appropriate to assess management performance, notably the four KPAs and the indicators that are being used? (Relevance)	This question is addressed initially through the Literature and Document Review to present the history, principles and design of MPAT over the three versions of implementation. Semi-structured interviews and a focus group with key informants provide qualitative data on the appropriateness of MPAT. Additional evidence from the quantitative survey also provides a whole of government perspective.	MPAT Guidelines and Documents; International public management literature; Case studies of national management performance assessment frameworks. Key respondents involved in the MPAT design: DPME, NT, DPSA, Accounting Officers, MPAT Coordinators, and Line Managers. Structured survey data of DGs and HoDs from participating MPAT departments.
(iii) Which other tools in the public service are assessing the same areas/standards as MPAT? What is the extent of the similarities, differences and the correlation (if any) of the MPAT results and is MPAT sourcing appropriately the data from other departments for its 4 KPAs? (Relevance/ Effectiveness)	The Literature and Document Review identified some initial tools that are further addressed with qualitative data on the similarities and differences of tools obtained from semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Correlation of analysis of MPAT results with some of the other related tools and processes will also yield findings into the effectiveness of MPAT.	MPAT Guidelines and Documents; National public management literature; Documents on frameworks and tools that assess public service in other departments. Key respondents involved in the MPAT design: DPME, DPSA, NT, Accounting Officers, MPAT Coordinators. Representatives from 12 national departments and 16 provincial departments participating in interviews and focus groups, including departmental KPA co-ordinators.
(v) What is working well and what is not working well with MPAT and the process used? (Efficiency/ Effectiveness)	The question is addressed through qualitative data collected during focus groups and semi-structured interviews, as well as quantitative data from the structured questionnaire intended to identify process strengths and weaknesses.	Representatives from 12 national departments and 16 provincial departments participating in interviews and focus groups. Structured survey data of DGs and HoDs from all participating MPAT departments.
(iv) Which public service institutions are using the MPAT results? How are	This question is addressed through mainly qualitative data garnered during the focus groups	Representatives from 12 national departments and 16 provincial departments

<i>Evaluation question (Criteria)</i>	<i>Methodology</i>	<i>Data sources</i>
they utilising them and what are the benefits? (Effectiveness)	and semi-structured interviews. It will be supported by limited quantitative data and analysed in relation to existing secondary performance data insofar as possible.	participating in interviews and focus groups. Secondary performance data for management practice available for the departments. Structured survey data of DGs and HoDs from all participating MPAT departments.
(i) Is there evidence that national and provincial departments have improved their management practices as a result of the MPAT process? If so, to what extent has this happened? (Effectiveness)	The assessment uses the historical MPAT results and secondary data for the indicators of management practice identified. This is supplemented with additional quantitative survey evidence, deepened and enriched by qualitative data from the interviews and focus groups. Correlation analysis of other measures of management practice over the duration of MPAT implementation will be used to analyse and make findings on how management practices have or have not improved as a result of the MPAT process.	Historical MPAT results for 1.1-1.3 and secondary performance data for all 155 departments available. Structured survey data of DGs and HoDs from all participating MPAT departments. Representatives from 12 national departments and 16 provincial departments participating in interviews and focus groups.
(vi) How can MPAT (the framework and tool) be strengthened or changed to improve the attainment of its intended objective? (Informed by criteria synthesis judgement)	Synthesising the analysis of all data will identify those weaknesses in the current MPAT design and implementation. These conclusions will then inform a set of recommendations produced to improve MPAT.	All primary and secondary data and analysis, incorporating data received through peer review and departmental consultation on draft deliverables.

Appendix C: Detailed correlation analysis between MPAT and AG findings

The figure below shows the number of departments where the MPAT and AG performance moved in the same direction, where they move in the opposite direction, and where one moved but the other did not. The mostly likely standards to move together (for 147 departments nationally and provincially) appear to be MPAT's 3.1.1 HR Planning and the AG's HR Management, and 3.1.1 and the AG's Human Resource Management and compensation. MPAT's standard on Strategic Plans 1.1.1 and the AG's standard on Strategic Management also appeared to correlate as did 4.1.2 Acquisition Management and the AG's unauthorised, irregular as well as fruitless and wasteful expenditure, although in this case there were also significant number of departments where the outcome in the MPAT score or auditor's finding changed while the other remained the same.

This analysis is supported by the findings of statistical analysis in the Statistical Appendix to DPME's Report on the State of Management Practices in the Public Services, which identifies weak correlations between the AG's targets and MPAT scores for standards 3.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.1.3, 3.2.4 and 3.3.1 in the HRM KPA and standard 4.2.3, Unauthorised, irregular and fruitless and wasteful expenditure in the Financial Management KPA.

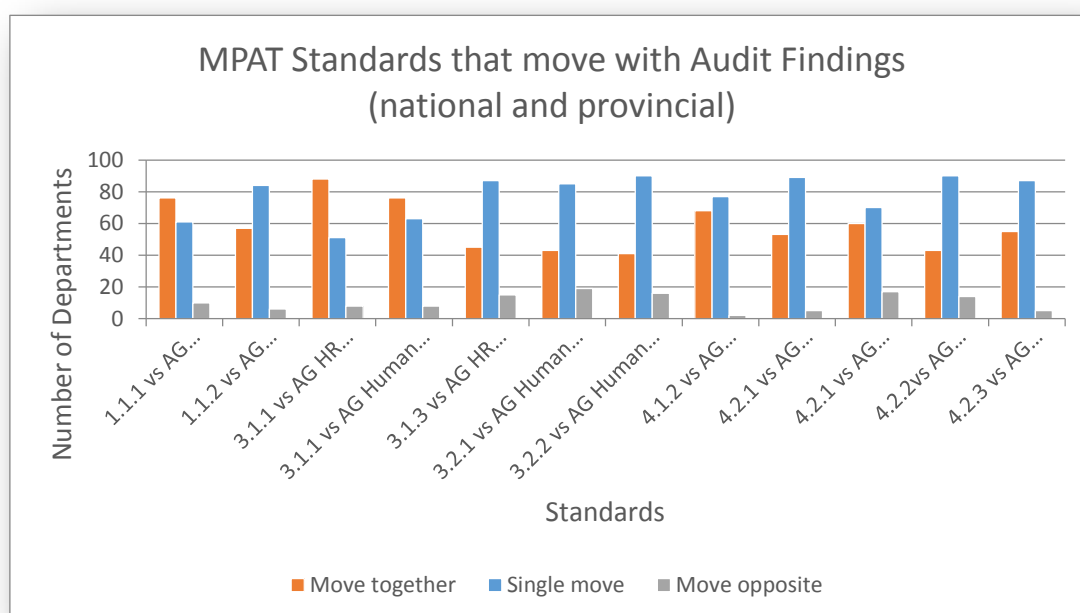


Figure 27: MPAT standards that show a relationship with audit findings

In the respective areas of compliance the AG identifies whether an area is: a repeat area for concern, a new area for concern, a previous area for concern that has now been addressed or an area that is not for concern. Looking at the

average change in MPAT score of the departments that receive each of these findings will indicate whether an improving MPAT score demonstrates a relationship with an improving audit outcome.

Five AG areas have been selected that should correspond with 2 MPAT standards each. They are Strategic and Performance Management, corresponding with MPAT's standards 1.1.1 Strategic Plans and 1.1.2 Annual Performance Plans; HR management, corresponding with MPAT 3.1.1 HR Planning and Human Resource Management and Compensation also corresponding to MPAT 3.1.1 HR Planning; Unauthorised, irregular and fruitless and wasteful expenditure, corresponding with MPAT's 4.1.2 Acquisition Management and 4.2.3 Unauthorised, irregular, fruitless and wasteful expenditure; and Expenditure Management, corresponding to 4.2.1 Cash Flow and 4.2.2 Payment of suppliers.

When looking at change in average MPAT scores compared to the AG finding the analysis order is as follows: new offender, repeat offender, clean, addressed finding. For a correlation this should show a decrease in MPAT score for a new finding, a close to static score for repeat offenders and clean departments and an increasing score for departments showing that they have addressed an AG finding. The graph should show an upward curve from left to right.

When looking at a the static average scores for MPAT 1.3 compared to the AG's findings the analysis order of the AG's finding is as follows: repeat offender, new offender, addressed finding and clean finding, arguing that repeat offenders are likely to be the worst performing departments while clean departments the best. A correlation between the average MPAT scores and the AG findings would show an upward curve from left to right, with the repeat offenders having the lowest average MPAT score and the clean departments the highest average MPAT score.

Looking at the AG's findings in strategic planning and performance management, there appears to be little correlation with the improving scores of MPAT's 1.1.1 Strategic Plan standard apart from departments where a previous issue being addressed leads, on average, to a 0.6 point improvement in MPAT score, the highest average improvement. The average change in MPAT standard 1.1.2 APPs, however shows a significant correlation with the AG's findings, with departments with new findings having a significant average decrease in score of 0.47 and departments addressing findings having an increase in score (see figure below).

Looking at a comparison of average score in MPAT 1.3 to audit outcomes in 2012/13 also suggests little correlation between audit outcomes and the scores for MPAT Standard 1.1.1, where repeat audit offenders average just under 3.5 for the MPAT standard, better than those who are both new offenders in terms of the AG, and those who have addressed concerns. Comparing the average score of departments for MPAT standard 1.1.2 APPs to the AG's finding reiterates the correlation between the standard and the AG's finding with those

departments with the clean findings scoring the highest, just ahead of those that have addressed findings.

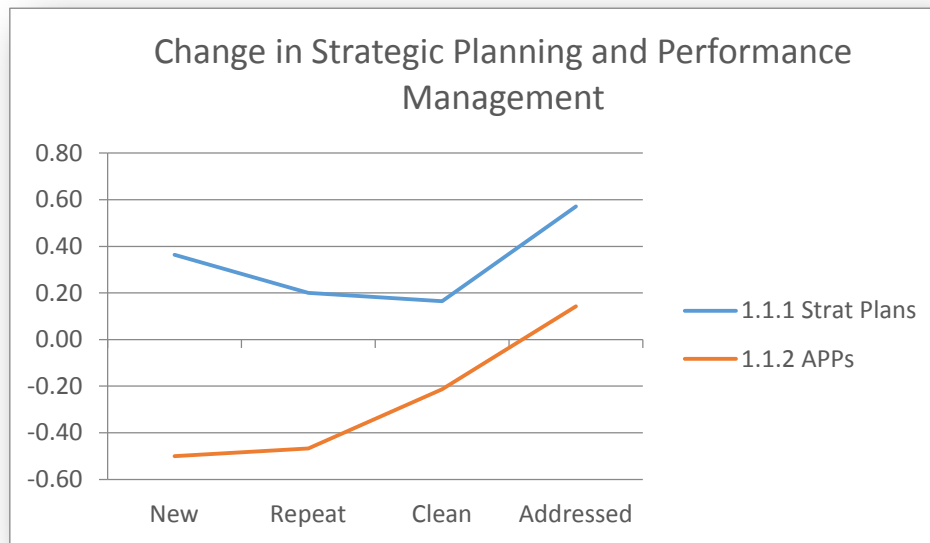


Figure 28: Change in Strategic Planning and Performance Management AG comparison

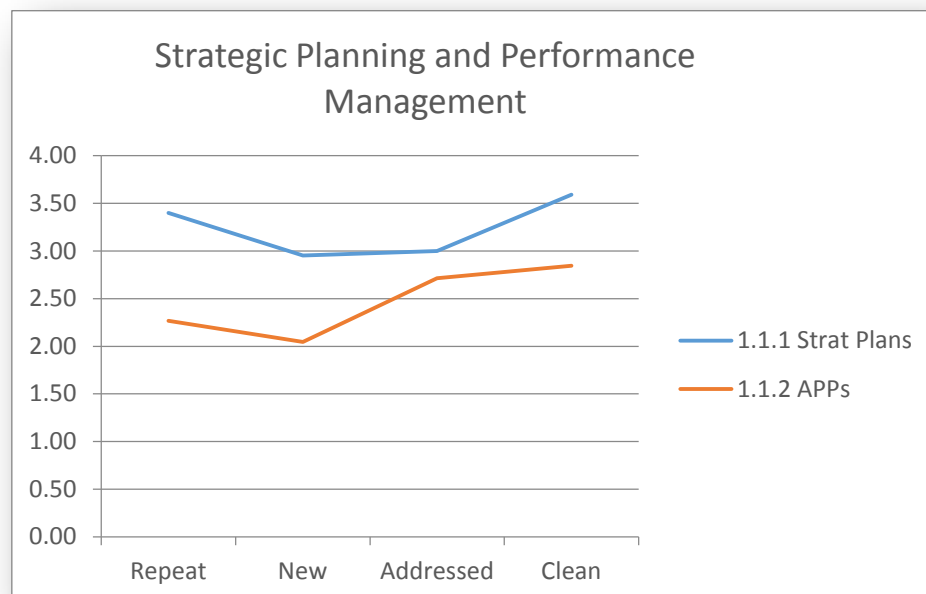


Figure 29: Strategic Planning and Performance Management AG comparison

The AG's findings on HR management show a strong correlation with improvements in MPAT scores. Departments with new findings against them show a decline in average MPAT score of about 0.2, while those whose AG findings have remained unchanged change relatively little at less than 0.1 for repeat offenders and about 0.16 for repeated clean findings. Those who have

addressed previous findings show a significant improvement in their average MPAT scores for HR planning, of over 0.55 points (figure 30).

The static MPAT 1.3 scores do not correlate as well with the AG's findings. Those repeat offenders and those with new findings both receive an average score of 2 while those departments who have address the AG's findings and have clean findings do score higher, but only by a small margin at 2.75 and 2.26 respectively (figure 31)

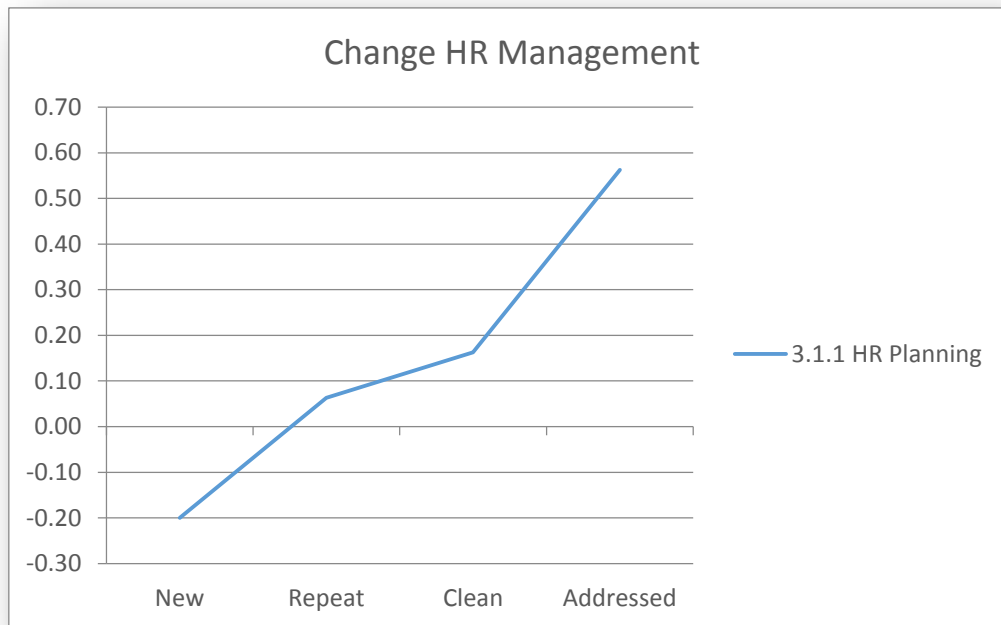


Figure 30: Change in HR Management AG comparison

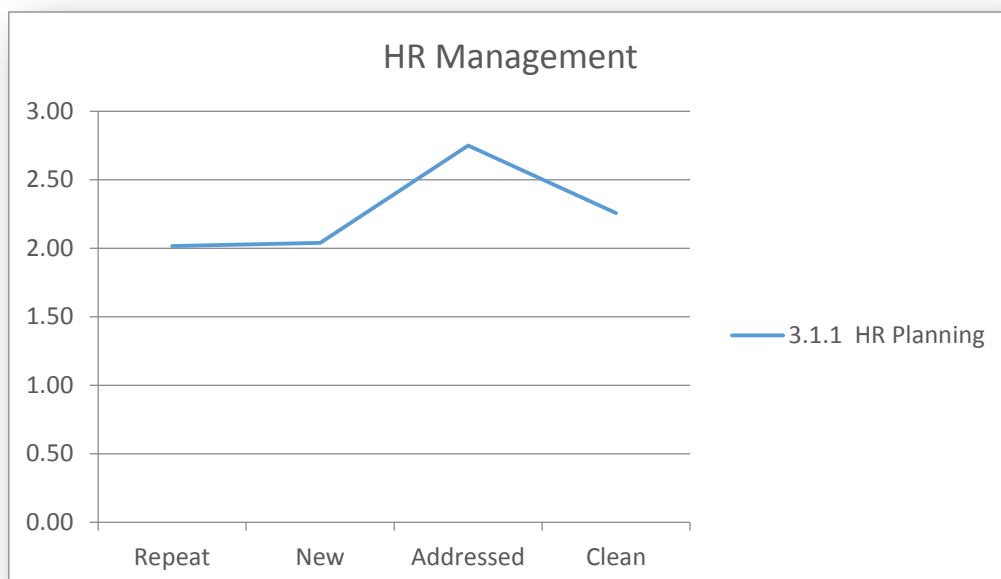


Figure 31: HR Management AG comparison

The change in MPAT scores from for HR Planning and show limited correlation to the findings by the AG on Human Resources Management and Compensation. Departments receiving negative findings from the AG, new and repeat offences, show very little change in average MPAT score, while clean and addressed AG finding show significant improvement (figure 31).

There, does though appear to be some correlation between the static MPAT1.3 and the AG's findings, with repeat offenders scoring lowest, and clean departments having the highest average score (figure 32).

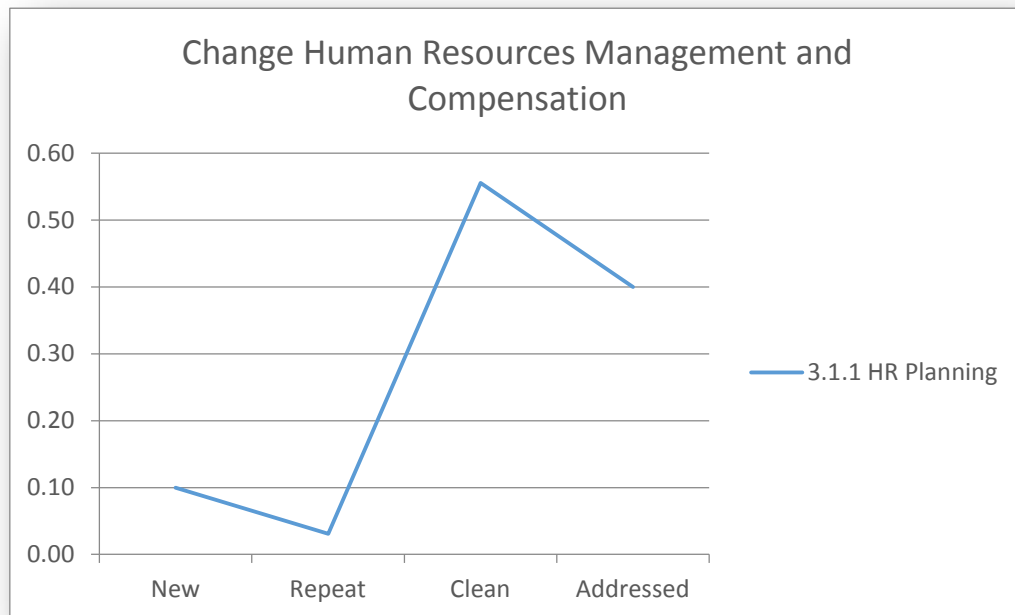


Figure 32: Change in Human Resources Management and Compensation AG comparison

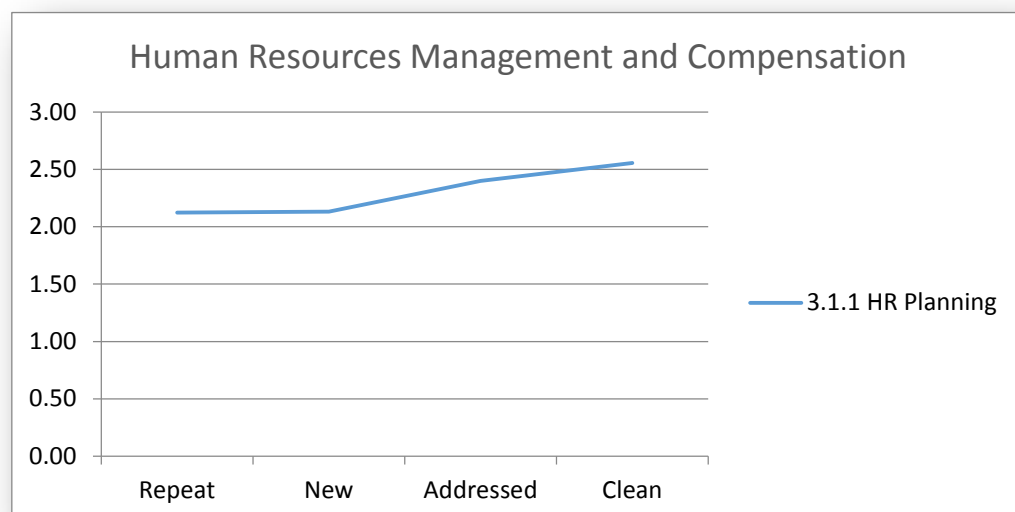
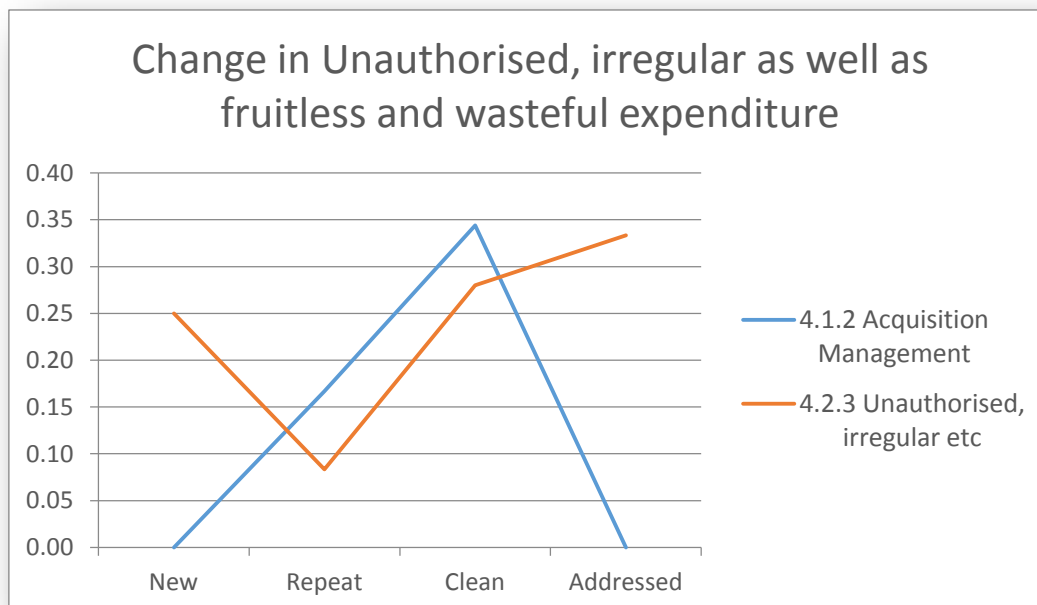


Figure 33: Human Resources Management and Compensation AG comparison

Looking at the AG's findings regarding unauthorised, irregular, fruitless and wasteful expenditure, there appears to be some limited correlation between changes in MPAT scores and the MPAT standard 4.1.2 Acquisition Management. There does appear to be some correlation between the AG's finding and the changes in MPAT scores for standard 4.2.3 Unauthorised, irregular and fruitless and wasteful expenditure, as the average change in scores is higher for those departments that have addressed issues and have clean findings, than those that have new issues and repeat offenders. However, those with departments with new findings' scores are still improving, which is a surprising outcome (figure 34).

The MPAT 1.3 scores in comparison to the AG's findings, however, suggest there is some correlation between the MPAT scores and the AG's findings, with the lowest average MPAT score being scores by repeat offenders, and the highest average for the department that have clean AG findings for acquisition management, with a similar pattern occurring for MPAT's 4.2.3 Unauthorised, irregular and fruitless and wasteful expenditure, except for those departments that have addressed the auditors findings, which score low on MPAT (figure 34).

**Figure 34: Change in Unauthorised, irregular as well as fruitless and wasteful expenditure AG comparison**

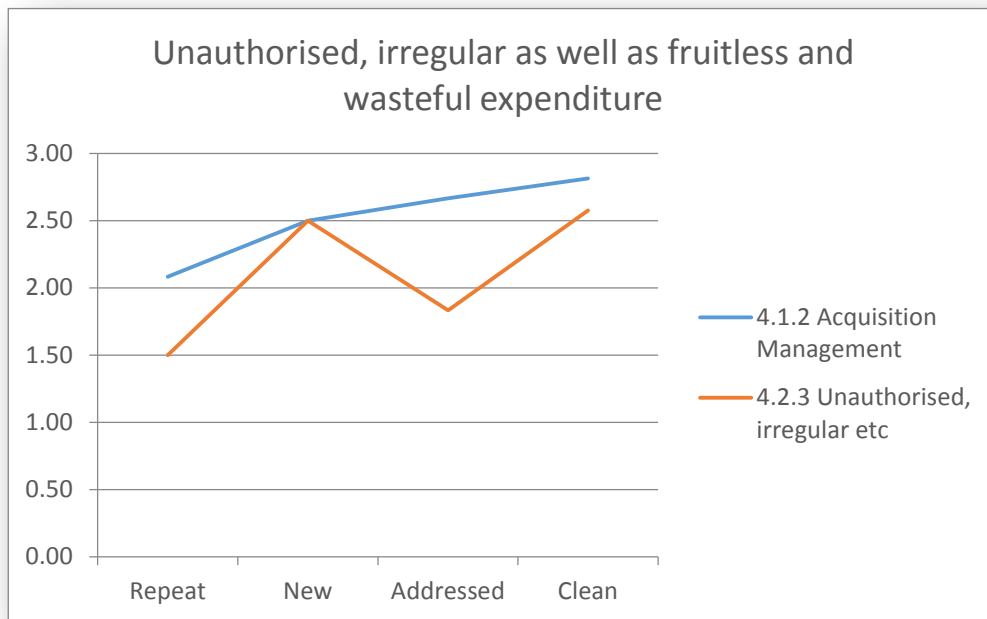


Figure 35: Unauthorised, irregular as well as fruitless and wasteful expenditure AG comparison

The AG's findings on expenditure management show no correlation with changes in the MPAT scores for standard 4.2.1 Cash Flow, but scores for 4.2.2 payment of suppliers do seem to decline less with improvements in the AG findings, it is a surprising outcome that the those departments addressing issues to the satisfaction of the AG would still experience a decline in the MPAT score (Figure 36).

The MPAT 1.3 scores also show little correlation with the AG's findings for 2012/13, other than that they are on average higher for those departments with clear audit findings (figure 37).

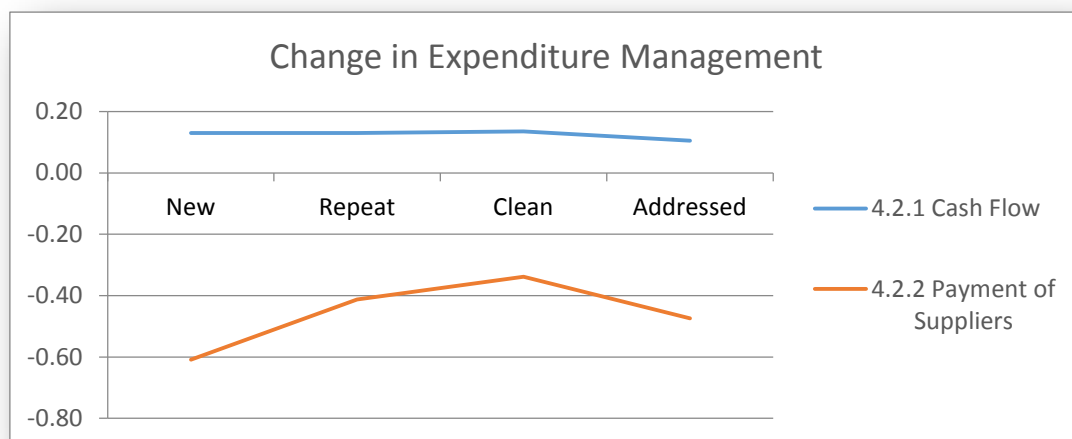


Figure 36: Change in Expenditure Management AG comparison

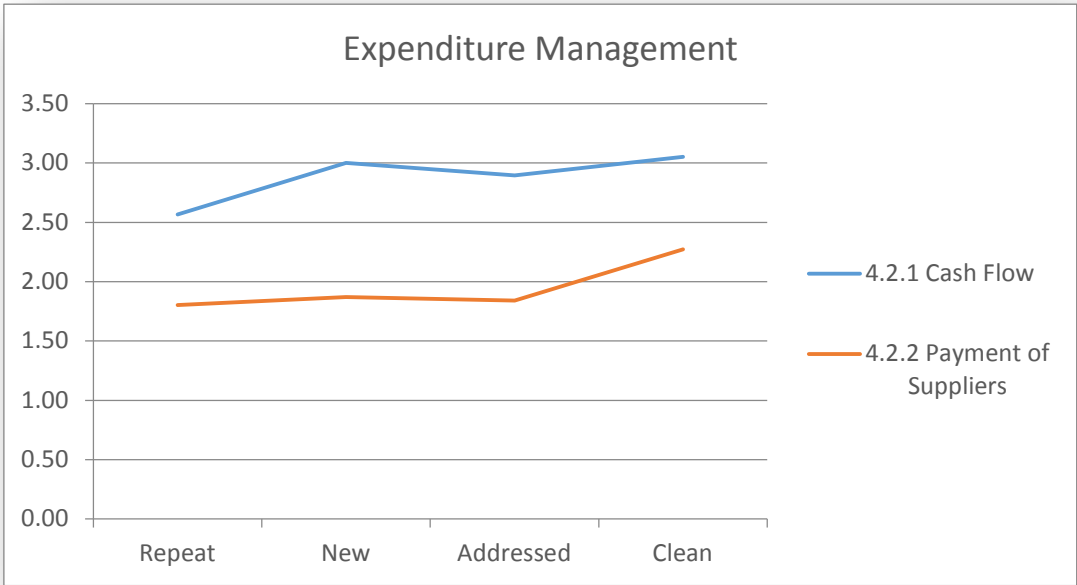


Figure 37: Expenditure Management AG comparison

Appendix D: Electronic Questionnaire

The following questions are intended to be perception-based, and should reflect the Accounting Officer of a given department's understanding of MPAT at present.

Please take five (5) minutes of your time to fill out this brief and easy-to-complete questionnaire, administered as part of the Implementation Evaluation of the Management Performance Assessment Tool (MPAT). All opinions will be treated confidentially.

1. Are you from a national department or from one of the following provinces?

National Department

Eastern Cape

Free State

Gauteng

Kwazulu-Natal

Limpopo

Mpumalanga

Northern Cape

Western Cape

North West

2. Which of the following statements best describes why the department undertakes MPAT in your opinion?

The Minister or MEC expects/instructs us to undertake MPAT

Other departments undertake MPAT and so should we

MPAT is a meaningful opportunity for departmental learning and improvement

MPAT appears in performance agreements and statutory plans so we must

3. In your opinion, how appropriate are the four KPAs (e.g. Strategic Management, Governance and Accountability, Financial Management and Human Resource Management) when measuring management performance?

[Pick the date]

Absolutely appropriate
Appropriate
Slightly appropriate
Neutral
Slightly inappropriate
Inappropriate
Absolutely inappropriate

4. In your opinion, how appropriate are the standards used across the four KPAs as measures of management performance?

Absolutely appropriate
Appropriate
Slightly appropriate
Neutral
Slightly inappropriate
Inappropriate
Absolutely inappropriate

5. How satisfied are you with the tools and resources (e.g. guidelines, web-based technologies, support information, etc.) available to undertake MPAT?

Very satisfied
Satisfied
Unsure
Dissatisfied
Very dissatisfied

6. How satisfied are you with the support provided by DPME, if you represent a national department or provincial Office of the Premier (OtP or equivalent) to undertake MPAT? If you are a provincial department other than an OtP, how satisfied are you with the support from the OtP to undertake MPAT?

Very satisfied
Satisfied
Unsure

[Pick the date]

Dissatisfied

Very dissatisfied

7. How satisfied are you with the support available to your department from transversal/policy departments (e.g. DPISA and National Treasury) to address and resolve issues identified by MPAT results in the improvement plan?

Very satisfied

Satisfied

Unsure

Dissatisfied

Very dissatisfied

8. How accurate do you consider your department's MPAT scores as a reflection of what they are intended to measure?

Very accurate

Somewhat accurate

Accurate

Somewhat inaccurate

Inaccurate

9. Which of the following best describes what you believe MPAT results measure about your department?

Compliance to management prescripts

Management capacity

Management practice

Management performance

All of the above

10. Which statement do you think best describes how your department uses MPAT results for planning purposes?

We do not have a management improvement plan or any plan that takes MPAT results into consideration

We take MPAT results into account across a range of planning documents, but not one in particular

We have management improvement plan informed by MPAT

We are implementing and monitoring a management improvement plan informed by MPAT

[Pick the date]

We are seeing improvements in management performance as a result of implementing and monitoring a management improvement plan informed by MPAT

11. In your opinion, how useful is MPAT as a tool for improving management performance in your department?

Completely useful

Mostly useful

Slightly useful

Not at all useful

12. Are there any comments you would like to provide regarding MPAT?

If so, please elaborate below.

THANK YOU

[Pick the date]

Appendix E: Interview guidelines

The following provides an example interview instrument, inclusive of the full suite of interview questions applied across respondents. The list of questions was also the basis for the focus group questions.

Informed Consent Agreement

I have read the accompanying Informed Consent Agreement and Information Statement. I have had the opportunity to ask, and I have received answers to, any questions I had regarding the evaluation research. I understand that if I have any additional questions about my rights as a participant, I may contact Nishendra Moodley of Palmer Development Group (PDG) as per the contact details included in the Information Statement.

I agree to take part in this evaluation as a research participant and I am aware that my statements may be attributed to me. I understand that I have the right to discontinue the interview at any time or refuse to answer any questions. By my signature I affirm that I have received a copy of the Information Statement and I am aware that this interview may be recorded.

Type/Print Participant's Name Date

Participant's Signature
In the case of multiple respondents for one interview, additional
acknowledgement of consent is provided.

Type/Print Participant's Name Date

Participant's Signature

Guiding questions for respondents

Understanding the individual context/ background

1. Please state:
 - your name and surname
 - official occupational title,
 - and the duration of time you have been in this position.

[Pick the date]

2. Please briefly state your responsibilities with regards to the implementation of MPAT.

Context of MPAT (Relevance / Efficiency)

3. Are there other departments or organisations which undertake assessments of public sector management?
 - a. If so, which?
 - b. What do these assessments entail?
 - c. Are there similarities with MPAT?
 - d. What are they?
4. What is the role of DPME in MPAT?
5. What is the role of DPSA in MPAT?
6. What is the role of National Treasury in MPAT?
7. What is the role of the Office of the Premier?
8. Are there any other departments that are involved in MPAT?
 - e. If so, what are their roles?
9. Should there be any other departments involved in MPAT?
 - f. If so, which departments? Why?
10. Does MPAT use all of the relevant data available to it in assessing management performance?
 - g. Why?

Process (Efficiency / Effectiveness)

11. What works well in the MPAT process?
12. What does not work well in the MPAT process?
13. How has the implementation process changed over the three years of implementation? Please describe.
14. What components of the process have been implemented as designed?
 - h. What parts not?
 - i. Why?

ICT platform

15. Have you been orientated on the web-based system for MPAT?
 - a. If so, how well did this prepare you for self-assessment?
16. How would you describe the functionality of the web-based system for MPAT?
17. Can the web-based system for MPAT be improved?
 - j. If yes, how so?

Self-Assessment

18. How appropriate is the self-assessment tool for assessing management performance?
19. How appropriate are the four KPAs (e.g. Strategic Management, Governance and Accountability, Financial Management, and Human Resource Management)?
 - k. Are there other areas that should be included or left out?
20. How appropriate are the standards?
21. Have you contributed feedback on the standards? If so, how has this feedback been used?
22. How appropriate is the 4-point scale as a metric for management performance?
23. How appropriate are the evidence requirements?

[Pick the date]

24. How appropriate are the tools (e.g. self-assessment tool, guidelines, case studies, etc)?

Assessment report

25. What has been the value of the assessment report?
26. How accurately does it depict the management strengths and deficiencies in the organisation?

Moderation

27. What has been the value of moderation?
28. What has been the value of the evidence requirements?
29. What has been the biggest challenge to effectively moderating all MPAT results?
30. How could moderation be improved?

Improvement Plan

31. What role does your department play in using MPAT results to improvement management performance (for partners)? How so?
32. Have you initiated a management improvement plan? If so, when in the process?
 l. Has this been helpful in addressing management performance deficiencies?
 m. How has this been helpful?
33. How did you respond to the management performance deficiencies identified?
34. Do you know where to derive support from for the relevant standard? And have you accessed it? Please describe.
35. In developing your improvement plan, if you requested support, how well supported were you by:
 n. DPME?
 o. National Treasury?
 p. DPSA?
 q. OtP?
36. Is the management improvement plan being implemented?
37. How do you monitor the management improvement plan?

Resourcing

38. What have been the resourcing (e.g. time, staff, budget, etc) implications of MPAT for implementing MPAT in your organization (not as a partner)?
- Self-assessment
 - Evidence provision
 - Challenges to MPAT Moderation
 - Learning events
 - Improvement plan & monitoring
39. What have been the resourcing implications of supporting DPME in implementing MPAT across the public service for your department (for partners)?
- r. Moderation & Case studies

[Pick the date]

40. Considering the resourcing requirements and the usefulness of MPAT, how do you think efficiency of this intervention could be improved?

s. And cost-effectiveness?

Emergent outcomes (Effectiveness)

Use of results

41. How have the results of MPAT been used in your organisation?
42. Are there any other public service institutions using the MPAT results?
- t. If so, who are they?
- u. How are they using them?
- v. Are there benefits?
- A. If so, what are they?

Learning

43. Have you participated in any MPAT learning events?
- w. If you participated, what were they?
- x. Have these been useful? How?

Management Practice

44. Have there been any changes to your management practices more generally?
- y. To what would you attribute changes to management practices?
45. Have your MPAT scores changed?
- z. To what would you attribute the changes to your MPAT scores?
46. Do you distinguish between management practices and management performance? If yes, how so?

Management Performance

47. Has the implementation of MPAT changed how the department is managed? If so, how?
48. What has been the result of MPAT in terms of management performance?
49. Are there any demonstrable measures (other than MPAT) to which you attribute the change? If so, please specify.

Improvement to the tool

50. How can MPAT be strengthened or changed to improve the attainment of its intended objective?

[Pick the date]

Information Statement Implementation Evaluation of MPAT

Palmer Development Group (PDG) has been contracted by the Department of Performance Monitoring & Evaluation in the Presidency, to undertake an implementation evaluation of the Management Performance Assessment Tool (MPAT). The following information is provided to inform you of the evaluation research. You may refuse to sign the consent form, and should you give consent to participate you are free to withdraw your participation at any time or to decline to respond to any question.

Purpose of the study

To assess the implementation of MPAT

Procedures

As part of this study, predominantly government staff will be asked to participate through semi-structured interviews to give insights into the development and conceptualisation of the MPAT and its subsequent implementation. All interviews may be recorded for reference purposes, with quotes attributed directly to respondents in his/her official capacity.

Benefits

All data obtained via semi-structured interviews will inform the formative assessment of the MPAT, distilling lessons learnt and making recommendations for improvement going forward. The results of the research and overall recommendations are expected to contribute to MPAT's overall aim of "improving management practices in national and provincial departments".

Risks

There are no direct risks posed to any individual participants. There are residual risks related to any subsequently proposed changes to the design and implementation of the MPAT but these remain largely unknown at this time.

Questions about participation

Should you have any questions regarding participation in the interview, please contact Nishendra Moodley or Mike Leslie.

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