

THE HANDBOOK
MADE IN
AFRICA
EVALUATION



VOLUME 1



AFRICAN EVALUATION ASSOCIATION

THE HANDBOOK MADE IN AFRICA EVALUATION

The Handbook on Made in Africa Evaluation is a pioneering work that redefines evaluation practices by centering African epistemologies, values, and methodologies. Developed by the African Evaluation Association (AfrEA), this volume challenges dominant Western frameworks and advocates for a transformative, culturally grounded approach to evaluation.

Divided into three comprehensive sections—Epistemology and Foundations, Theory and Methods, and Case Studies—the handbook brings together leading scholars and practitioners from across Africa. It explores a range of themes, including epistemic injustice, participatory evaluation approaches, and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). Through frameworks such as the African Relational Evaluation Paradigm, Indigenous Knowledge Systems, and the Swahili Evaluation Approach, contributors provide alternative perspectives that reflect African contexts and realities.

Emphasizing community empowerment, contextual relevance, and ethical accountability, this handbook not only documents the evolution of Made in Africa Evaluation but also serves as a political call to reclaim African agency in development evaluation. A vital resource for scholars, policymakers, and practitioners, this work offers insights that bridge theory and practice, ensuring that evaluation in Africa remains authentically rooted in indigenous knowledge and transformative change.

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HANDBOOK ON MADE IN AFRICA EVALUATION

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African Evaluation
Association

Volume 1



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We extend gratitude to the members of the editorial committee, whose leadership and expertise shaped the handbook. They are Dr. Miché Ouedraogo, President of AfrEA; Dr. Mjiba Frehiwot, Editor-in-Chief of the *African Evaluation Journal*; Dr. Mark Abrahams, former Editor-in-Chief of the *African Evaluation Journal*; Dr. Awuor Ponge, Vice President of AfrEA; Dr. Florence Etta, 6th President of AfrEA; Prof. Bagele Chilisa of the University of Botswana. Their collective dedication, insight, and scholarly contributions ensured that this publication is both rigorous and impactful.

We also acknowledge the invaluable contributions of all the authors who enriched this handbook with their expertise and research. Their work provided critical perspectives and innovative methodologies that advance the *Made in Africa Evaluation* movement.

Additionally, we recognize the AfrEA Board, whose vision and strategic leadership guided this project. The tireless administrative support and coordination from Emmanuel Nii Adotei Baddoo, Research Assistant at AfrEA, and the entire AfrEA Secretariat, was essential in bringing this publication to life.

This handbook stands as a testament to the collective efforts of all those committed to redefining evaluation in Africa - grounding it in indigenous knowledge, cultural relevance, and transformative action.

Summary

THE HANDBOOK ON MADE IN AFRICA EVALUATION

By the African Evaluation Association (AfrEA)

The *Handbook on Made in Africa Evaluation* is a pioneering work that redefines evaluation practices by centering African epistemologies, values, and methodologies. Developed by the African Evaluation Association (AfrEA), this volume challenges dominant Western frameworks and advocates for a transformative, culturally grounded approach to evaluation.

Divided into three comprehensive sections—Epistemology and Foundations, Theory and Methods, and Case Studies—the handbook brings together leading scholars and practitioners from across Africa. It explores a range of themes, including epistemic injustice, participatory evaluation approaches, and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). Through frameworks such as the African Relational Evaluation Paradigm, Indigenous Knowledge Systems, and the Swahili Evaluation Approach, contributors provide alternative perspectives that reflect African contexts and realities.

Emphasizing community empowerment, contextual relevance, and ethical accountability, this handbook not only documents the evolution of *Made in Africa Evaluation* but also serves as a political call to reclaim African agency in development evaluation. A vital resource for scholars, policymakers, and practitioners, this work offers insights that bridge theory and practice, ensuring that evaluation in Africa remains authentically rooted in indigenous knowledge and transformative change.

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Message from the President of AfrEA

It is with great pride and purpose that I present to you the *Handbook on Made in Africa Evaluation*, a landmark contribution to the evolution and institutionalisation of African-rooted evaluation practice.

Since its inception in 1999, AfrEA has worked tirelessly to promote high-quality evaluations that are both led by and relevant to Africa. Our efforts to champion African voices and values in the evaluation ecosystem culminated in the formal emergence of the *Made in Africa Evaluation* (MAE) discourse at the 4th AfrEA Conference held in Niamey, Niger, in 2007. The call to “Make Evaluation Our Own” was more than a slogan. It marked the beginning of a movement to reclaim our narratives, redefine our priorities, and reshape evaluation in line with Africa’s diverse knowledge systems, cultures, and lived realities.

This handbook represents the continuation of that journey. It consolidates critical reflections, theoretical advances, and practical insights that speak to the uniqueness of African evaluation. Organized into three sections: *Epistemology & Foundations*, *Theory*, *Approaches & Methods*, and *Case Studies*, this volume captures the vibrant intellectual and practitioner-based engagements that define the MAE movement.

The *Handbook on Made in Africa Evaluation* is a product of collaboration, vision, and commitment by a diverse group of scholars, evaluators, and institutions who believe in the potential of evaluation to serve Africa’s development aspirations when it is owned by its people. It also builds upon the success of the *African Evaluation Journal* (AEJ), further expanding AfrEA’s mission to support knowledge generation and dissemination across the continent.

HANDBOOK ON MADE IN AFRICA EVALUATION

As President of AfrEA, I am honoured to witness and support this significant milestone. I extend my deepest appreciation to the editorial team, contributors, and partners who made this publication possible. Let this handbook be both a resource and a call to action for all evaluators working in Africa, to challenge entrenched paradigms, to innovate boldly, and to ensure that our evaluations truly reflect the contexts and communities we serve.

In solidarity and commitment,

Dr. Miché Ouedraogo

President, African Evaluation Association (AfrEA)

Preface

Evaluation is a powerful tool for shaping societies, driving progress, and fostering sustainable development. However, for too long, dominant evaluation paradigms have been rooted in perspectives and methodologies that do not fully reflect Africa's unique realities, philosophies, and traditions. The *Made in Africa Evaluation* (MAE) concept seeks to address this gap by centering African knowledge systems, values, and frameworks within the practice of evaluation.

This handbook is a culmination of the collaborative efforts of esteemed scholars and practitioners who have dedicated themselves to advancing Africa-rooted evaluation paradigms. It brings together diverse contributions that explore epistemological foundations, methodological approaches, and practical applications of MAE. By unpacking African-rooted paradigms, frameworks, and evaluation tools, this volume offers invaluable insights into how evaluation can be redefined to better serve the continent.

The chapters within this handbook delve into critical themes, including the philosophical underpinnings of MAE, the integration of indigenous knowledge systems, and the pursuit of equitable evaluation through principles that honor Africa's cultural and historical contexts. Through case studies and empirical research, contributors illustrate how evaluation practices across different African countries have evolved to embrace participatory, context-sensitive, and inclusive methodologies.

A landmark production marking 25 years of promoting African evaluation excellence by AfrEA, this handbook is both a celebration and a call to action. It is designed to serve as a guiding resource for evaluators, policymakers, researchers, and practitioners who seek to embed African perspectives into their evaluative processes.

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By embracing the *Made in Africa Evaluation* approach promoted in this book, Africans are affirming the importance of African voices in defining the continent's development trajectory, steadily building a future where evaluation is not merely an external process but an intrinsic tool for transformation led by Africa, and for Africa.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Stephen A.', with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

Stephen Aloo

Senior Director, Impact Strategy, Analytics and Evaluation

Mastercard Foundation

Introduction: The Genesis and Meaning of MAE

*Bagele Chilisa, Miché Ouedraogo and
Emmanuel Nii Adotei Baddoo*

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is based on a synthesis paper commissioned by AfrEA in 2013 (Chilisa 2015). The purpose of the commission was to bring together the disparate literature and voices on what defines the MAE concept both in theory and practice. The synthesis paper, led by Bagele Chilisa funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMFG) marked the beginning of a process of more clearly articulating, building, and making visible and accessible the scholarship that underpins MAE.

The methodology for the synthesis paper included a Skype meeting with key staff from AfrEA who defined the scope of the work and identified documents required for the study. The key informants for the interviews consisted of eight evaluators, three from the USA and five from the rest of Africa who responded to a structured interview e-questionnaire. In addition, former AfrEA Presidents were interviewed through Skype. A review of literature on African rooted paradigms, worldviews and philosophies that articulate African culture, and history and belief systems was conducted and included a search and review of exemplary work and scholarship that illustrates MAE approaches. A document analysis of the AfrEA Conference Proceedings (2007, 2013), the Bellagio Conference proceedings (2012), and the Paris Declaration (2012)

was conducted to provide evidence on the chronology of events that shape the discourse on MAE and the organizations and individuals that drive the discourse. A content analysis of evaluation literature and literature on African rooted paradigms, world-views and philosophies that articulate African culture, history and belief systems was conducted to: 1) place the discourse on MAE within the international discourse on cultural competence in evaluation; 2) trace the genesis of evaluation in Africa; 3) reveal the African rooted paradigms, world-views and philosophies that articulate African culture, history and belief systems, and 4) provide exemplary work and scholarship that illustrates a MAE. The chapter focuses on evolution of AfrEA and the MAE concept.

THE GENESIS AND EVOLUTION OF THE MAE IDEA

The origin of the MAE can be traced back to the beginning of the re-invention period in the 1990's that was characterized by African resistance to the universalization of Euro-American thought and in particular the resistance by researchers, policy analysts and evaluators to evaluation practice dominated by external evaluators who often times were ignorant of the context and culture within which evaluation was conducted and focused on program evaluation outcomes as defined by the sponsors at the expense of the beneficiaries views on what counted as valuable program outcomes. In response to this colonial evaluation there was a call for local researchers to conduct independent policy evaluation research (Cloete Fanie 2014). Organisations such as SADCC, CODESRIA, SAPES, AEC and OSSREA developed independent local capacity that engaged in policy evaluation. UN program sponsors, for instance, UNICEF created evaluation networks to enhance capacity building for UNICEF and other evaluators (Cloete & Fanie 2014). The emphasis in these early initiatives on evaluation in Africa was on building capacity

of Africans to carryout evaluation and on creating a network of evaluators.

In the late 1990's there was a shift towards making evaluation cultural appropriate. For instance, (Odhan 2000) noted that Africa was dependent on North America and European literature for criteria or standards for evaluating the success of programs and that these did not always reflect the African realities. Augmenting this view, Kate and Patel (2000) called for 'evaluation thinking for a better Africa' and creating 'a common vision' of evaluation in Africa. In 1999 AfrEA was formed in response to the growing demand for information sharing, advocacy, and advanced capacity building in evaluation in Africa, The Africa Evaluation Association (AfrEA) plays a unique role in Africa and globally. AfrEA is the only pan-Africa umbrella organization for national monitoring and evaluation associations and networks in Africa (also known as VOPEs), and a resource for individual evaluators in countries where national bodies do not exist. Historic to these developments was the formation of Monitoring and Evaluation Associations, starting with Ghana. In 2018 AfrEA had a growing Anglophone-Francophone membership base of 39 evaluation associations, 12 institutional members and 113 individual members in countries where there are no evaluation associations.

The African Evaluation Association (AfrEA) seeks to promote high-quality evaluation that is led by and rooted in Africa, ensuring that evaluation theory and practice are relevant and responsive to African contexts and needs. In pursuit of this objective, the discourse on Made in Africa Evaluation (MAE) emerged primarily through conferences, academic reports, international literature, and grey literature. Although this conversation has been ongoing since 2007, stakeholders continue to engage and collaborate on defining, implementing, and critiquing MAE. MAE traces its origins to the 4th AfrEA Conference in Niamey, Niger (January 17–19, 2007), where a special session, "Making Evaluation Our Own: Strengthening the Foundation for Africa-Rooted and Africa-Led Monitoring and Evaluation," organized by Zenda Ofir, Sulley Gariba, and Oumoul Khayri Ba Tall, laid its foundation. The

keynote by Michael Patton and Sulley Gariba formally launched this Africa-rooted evaluation discourse.

MAE is an ongoing journey to uncover, identify, develop, and codify the uniqueness of the African approach to evaluation. This handbook seeks to extend and expand the influence of knowledge generated in Africa on African evaluation practices, theories, and methods. It is the second major knowledge product on evaluation, following the African Evaluation Journal (AEJ), launched in 2013, which has stimulated critical thinking and publication of papers on African evaluation. Since the emergence of the Made in Africa Evaluation (MAE) discourse in 2007, numerous publications have explored the concept and synthesized its diverse contributions.

THE MADE IN AFRICA EVALUATION CONCEPT

The closest to a concept of a made in Africa Evaluation can be traced back to the 2007, 17th – 19th January 4th AfrEA Conference in Niamey, Niger. At this conference there was a special stream to discuss the topic: *Making Evaluation our Own: Strengthening the Foundation for Africa Rooted and Africa Led Monitoring and Evaluation* organised by Zenda Ofir, Sulley Gariba and Oumol Tall. Michael Patton and Sulley Gariba fielded the keynote that launched the Making Evaluation Our Own Concept. The introductory session set the scene for the day's discussions by considering:

- I. *The African Evaluation Challenge* (Dr Zenda Ofir, South Africa).
- II. *The Trends, Shaping M&E in the Developing World* (Prof Robert Picciotto, UK).
- III. *The African Mosaic and Global Interactions: The Multiple Roles of and Approaches to Evaluation* (Prof Michael Patton & Prof Donna Mertens USA).

The last two presentations explained, among others, the theoretical underpinnings of evaluation as it is practiced in the world today.

The second session focused on evaluation methodologies used internationally and the variety of paradigms related to evidence in evaluation. This session was a panel discussion led by Jim Rugh, Bill Savedoff, Rob van den Bert, Fred Carden, Nancy MacPherson and Ross Conner. The final session led by Bagele Chilisa, considered some possibilities for developing an evaluation culture rooted in Africa. In this session some examples of how the African culture lends itself to evaluation were given. In addition, some examples that demonstrated that the currently used evaluation methodologies could be enriched if it considered African worldviews were given. The stream was funded by NORAD. NORAD also offered to fund an evaluation that could be used as a test case for an African rooted approach.

At the end of the plenary, three broad challenges facing evaluation in Africa were noted as follows: cultural and contextual relevance of evaluations; Appropriateness of evaluation methodologies and approaches and ethics and values in evaluation.

CULTURAL AND CONTEXTUAL RELEVANCE OF EVALUATIONS

The conference reiterated concerns raised earlier by researchers' policy analysts and evaluators that much of the evaluation practice in Africa is based on external values and contexts, is donor driven and the accountability mechanisms tend to be directed towards recipients of aid rather than both recipients and the providers of aid (Report on the Special Stream at the 4thAfrEA Conference Jan 17-19, 2007).

ETHICS, ATTRIBUTION AND POWER RELATIONS

Evaluation must contribute to development in Africa by addressing challenges related to country ownership; the macro-micro disconnects; attribution; ethics and values; and power relations; Independence

versus dependence evaluations and transactional/commercial versus development focus.

Paradigms and Methodologies in Evaluation There is need to re-examine our own preconceived assumptions; underpinning values, paradigms (e.g. transformative v/s pragmatic); what is acknowledged as being evidence; and by whom, before we can select any particular methodology/approach.

RESOLUTIONS PASSED

AfrEA further passed the following resolutions:

- African evaluation standards and practices should be based on African values and world views
- The existing body of knowledge on African values and worldviews should be central to guiding and shaping evaluation in Africa.
- There is a need to foster and develop the intellectual leadership and capacity within Africa and ensure that it plays a greater role in guiding and developing evaluation theories and practices.

To enable the implementation of this resolution, it was recommended that AfrEA consider the following:

- AfrEA guides and supports the development of African guidelines to operationalize the African evaluation standards and in doing so, ensure that both the standards and operational guidelines are based on the existing body of knowledge on African values and worldviews.
- AfrEA works with its networks to support and develop institutions, such as Universities, to enable them to establish evaluation as a profession and meta discipline within Africa.

- AfrEA identifies mechanisms in which African evaluation practitioners can be mentored and supported by experience African evaluation professionals.
- AfrEA engages with funding agencies to explore opportunities for developing and adopting evaluation methodologies and practices that are based on African values and worldviews and advocate for their inclusion in future evaluations.
- AfrEA encourages and supports knowledge generated from evaluation practice within Africa to be published and profiled in scholarly publications. This may include:
 - Supporting the inclusion of peer reviewed publications on African evaluation in international journal on evaluation (for example, the publication of a special issue on African evaluation)
 - The development of scholarly publications specially related to evaluation theories and practices in Africa (e.g. a journal of the AfrEA). (Making Evaluation our Own – Report on the Special Stream at the 4thAfrEA Conference Jan 17-19, 2007).

One of the key resolutions passed by AfrEA that should guide our understanding of an MAE was that the existing body of knowledge on African values and worldviews should be central to guiding and shaping evaluation in Africa and that AfrEA should foster and develop the intellectual leadership and capacity within Africa and ensure that it plays a greater role in guiding and developing evaluation theories and practices.

An additional fourth concern focused on the paradigms and methodologies in evaluation. The making evaluation our own stream Expressed the need to re-examine our own preconceived assumptions; underpinning values, paradigms, e.g. transformative v/s pragmatic; what is acknowledged as being evidence; and by whom, before we can select any particular methodology / approach. Resolutions and recommendations passed were as follows:

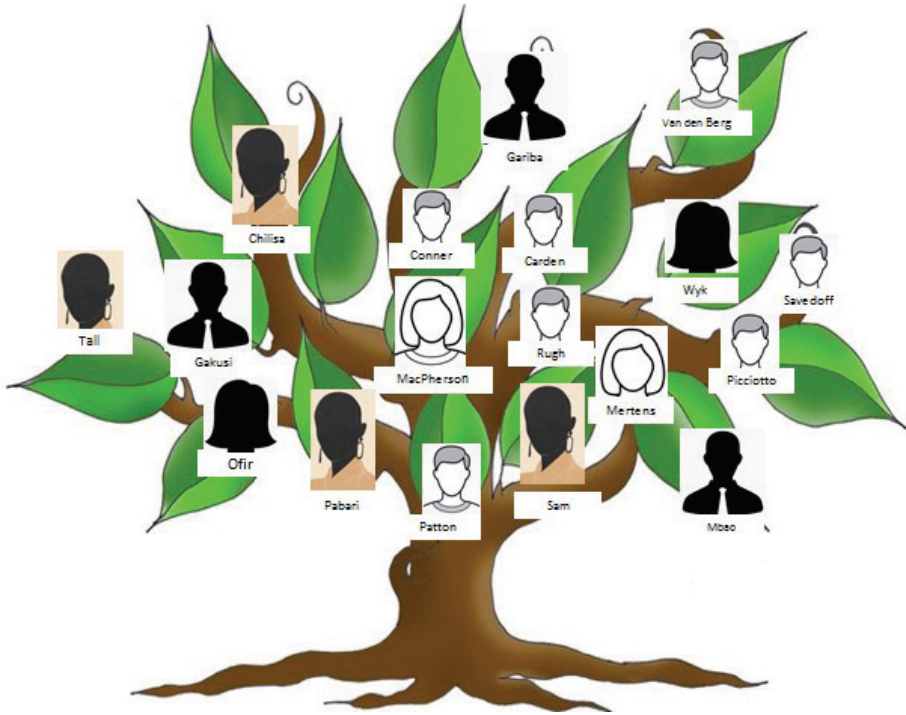
1. African evaluation standard should be based on African values and world views
2. Resolved that the existing body of knowledge on African values and world views should be central to guiding and shaping evaluation in Africa
3. Expressed the need to foster and develop intellectual leadership and capacity within Africa.

AfrEA was to:

- i. Support the development of African guidelines to operationalize the African Evaluation standards.
- ii. Work with its networks to support and develop institutions such as universities to enable them to establish evaluation as a profession and a meta discipline.
- iii. Identify mechanisms in which African evaluation practitioners can be mentored and supported by experienced evaluation professionals.
- iv. Engage with agencies to explore opportunities for developing and adopting evaluation methodologies and practices that are based on African values and world views and advocate for their inclusion in future evaluations.
- v. Encourage and support knowledge generated from evaluation practice within Africa to be published and publicised in scholarly publications.

Figure 1 depicts a tree showing panellists, presenters and contributors at the historic AfrEA 2007 special stream on 'Making Evaluation our Own'. The session laid the foundation for what has become known as MAE. Figure 1 shows the 4th AfrEA Special Stream panellists and Presenter, Bellagio Thought leaders and Significant Others.

Figure 1: Panellists, Presenters and Contributors at The AfrEA 2007 Special Stream On MAE



Note: The black coloured pictures represent contributors from Africa while rest represents the contributors from Europe and America

Source: information retrieved from: AfrEA <https://www.google.com/search?q=Report+on+the+Special+Stream+at+the+4th+AfrEA+Conference> and <https://www.google.com/search?q=made+in+africa+evaluation+synthesis+paper> Bellagio Conference of 2012.

Another contribution towards the meaning of MAE came from the Bellagio conference. The idea of the Forum was initiated by Nancy MacPherson who was then at Rockefeller. Zenda Ofir developed the concept of and wrote the proposal that was eventually accepted by the Rockefeller Foundation for the Bellagio event. CLEAR-AA financially sponsored and facilitated the arrangements. (<https://www.theclear-initiative.org/sites/default/files/2016-04/>). The Bellagio conference further expanded on the resolutions made at 4th AfrEA conference and

expressed the need for developing capacities for innovation in African evaluation, while respecting the principles of capacity development as an endogenous process. It was recommended that such strategies be based, among others, on government goals for evaluation that go beyond responsiveness to challenges, to determining accountability for value for money, with key goals that include the following:

- Governance and accountability to citizens and those who provide support
- Develop capacity for innovation in African evaluation
- Development of learning nations and groups for informed reflection, innovation and change
- Stimulation of African thought leadership in evaluation, in particular through analytically oriented institutions (research and evaluation centres and universities) to enhance their role as independent evaluation institutions, centres of expertise and think tanks on evaluation.
- Knowledge development and contribution to global knowledge.

A strategy to expand the pool of evaluation knowledge generation from within Africa was to be achieved through the following specific actions:

- Generate, compile and classify a transparent repository of knowledge on African evaluations
- Map capacity and building initiatives in evaluation in Africa
- Move the compiled repositories and maps to the wider African public
- Gauge demand from specialist universities, think tanks and evaluation projects to partner in order to generate original knowledge, by drawing lessons learnt and best practices on the theory, perception and application of Africa-rooted-evaluation and capacity
- Document and disseminate the approaches and results of research into evaluation theory and practices done on the continent.

Another resolution was to catalyse a strong movement towards thought leadership that can enhance the evaluation profession in Africa and support development policy and strategy by engaging with

- key frameworks, policies and strategies at national and regional levels
- International aid and other Global policy and regimes that influence African development
- The diversity of new actors and development funding modalities
- The belief-and-value-laden nature of both development and evaluation
- Evaluation theory and practise rooted in Africa. (Bellagio Conference Proceedings, 2012, pp. 13-14).

AFREA AND THE GLOBAL SOUTH

AfrEA is a member of the South to South (S2SE) initiative. S2SE's main goal is to address global asymmetries in decision-making, knowledge, and resources in the evaluation ecosystem so that the Global South can fully contribute to sustained and transformational development, informed by evaluation that reflects the knowledge, realities, and philosophies of the Global South (S2SE). S2SE is spearheaded by the five Global South regional evaluation associations (also known as Voluntary Organizations for Professional Evaluation, VOPES) in Africa, South Asia, Asia-Pacific, the Caribbean, and Latin America. As a member, AfrEA has an obligation to facilitate the uptake of its transformative activities. In their concept note, the South-to-South Cooperation (2018) critiques the notion that everything that comes from the global North is superior and scientifically more robust, with the Global South relegated to a passive recipient of 'tried and tested evaluation theories and practices. The S2S also notes the dearth of visible original work in the Global South, and the unidirectional lending and borrowing of knowledge where thus commissioned evaluations, M&E systems, and

education in evaluation continue to be informed by dominant paradigms from the Global South. ignoring the intricate contextual issues shaped by societal cultures and traditions in the Global South. S2S also note the dominant use of e frameworks developed by funders and commissioners, which has a narrow focus on results, hardly engaging with the approaches that can inform the customization of data collection and analysis to local contexts and societal cultures. S2S also laments the fact that Capacity strengthening tends to transfer knowledge from the Global North. Worse still, those who teach have been steeped in ideologies and frameworks from the Global North, thus, fresh perspectives, novel ideas and inspiring innovations remain limited

The S2SE Initiative launched 3-year strategic plan to mount a collaborative global campaign to begin to reverse asymmetries in the evaluation ecosystem by achieving the following four objectives:

1. **Awareness, capacity, and incentives**

Expand awareness, strengthen capacity and stimulate demand for the engagement of Global South perspectives and knowledge in decisions about evidence - what is evaluated, with whom, for whom, and how - both within and beyond the aid / public sector agenda.

2. **Visibility, positioning, and influence**

Engage in decision-making forums that shape evaluation and development in the Global South and globally to ensure that the perspectives of Global South evaluators, researchers, decision makers are central to determining agendas, resource flows and governance of evaluation and development.

3. **Knowledge and evidence from the Global South**

Elevate the visibility and influence of Global South knowledge and evidence by collecting, publishing and communicating existing work and generating new knowledge, research, and evidence of what works in development in the Global South – including why, how, for whom, and under what circumstances.

4. New spaces and new players driving change

Enhance the influence of Southern evaluators to engage with and respond to new spaces, new players and new generations driving global change in the Global South, including private investment, impact investing, philanthropy, and youth, (S2SE, 2018).

In addition, S2SE expressed a need to enable the Global South evaluation community to deepen its pride in and understanding of Indigenous experiences, values, perspectives, and philosophies that can help build the evaluation profession worldwide.

To achieve this objective, 'recognition prizes were to be used to elevate pride, credibility, and positioning of Global South evaluative knowledge and leaders who demonstrate and promote Global South evaluative knowledge and practice' (S2SE 2018).

The S2SE aimed to:

1. Engage knowledge management and innovation specialists to elevate valuable Global South knowledge from grey literature, which is not formally published or available to wider audiences.
2. Explore new digital technology to enable Global South evaluators to communicate their work in traditional and non-traditional ways, and through multilingual platforms.
3. Make assertive efforts to expand publishing and communication (print, digital, and non-traditional forms) of existing work in the Global South and the Global North, and to give greater visibility to knowledge products that illustrate advanced elements of Global South practice by presenting unique contexts, values, cultures, philosophies and experiences of the Global South.

Table 1: S2SE Objectives and Expected Outputs

Objectives	Outputs
<i>Awareness, capacity, and incentives</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data on current expenditures and the extent of evaluation meant to benefit the Global South • Landscape map of key influencers and decision makers • Prize competition winners and best practice examples of authentic Global South evaluations • Outreach events and products in 5 regions • Engagements with indigenous studies institutions • Capacity building in collaboration with global ECD players • Business model for Glo
<i>Visibility, positioning, and influence</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical engagement map – country, regional and global • Negotiated changes – quick wins • Pilots for complex changes • Portfolio of cases illustrating changes in asymmetry, and lessons • Phase 2 proposal for scale
<i>Knowledge and evidence from the Global South</i>	<p>Inventory of Global South key knowledge products in each of 5 regions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Global South Indigenous knowledge products • Selective work published, digitally and in print • Research & development support programs • Incentive system for mapping and publishing cutting-edge work • Website content – new forms of publishing, blogging, etc. • Innovation prize winners – new knowledge & new evidence • Portfolio of expanded new knowledge products • New partnerships with knowledge brokers, innovation hubs and platforms – regionally and globally

Table 1: S2SE Objectives and Expected Outputs (*Continued*)

Objectives	Outputs
<i>New spaces and new players driving change</i>	<p>Identification and mapping of new spaces, new players, and new generation constituencies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New partnerships and experiments with new global players driving change in the Global South • New partnerships and deeper understanding of the role of innovation in Global South evaluation. • New approaches and frameworks for Global South evaluation • Emerging business model for Global South evaluators.

The AfrEA resolutions and aspirations derived from the 4th AfrEA conference in 2007, the Bellagio conference in 2012, the recommendations from the 2015 concept paper, and the S2SE resolutions sum up the MAE purpose and strategies for implementation of activities to realise its goals.

TOWARDS THE MEANING AND PRACTICE OF MAE

There is a vigorous ongoing discourse in the MAE, visible through conference papers, webinars, articles, blogs books and book chapters. MAE has “resurfaced as an important part of the discourse on evaluation practice and theory in Africa and is making a significant contribution to global evaluation discourse (Michelitsch 2019). The meaning of MAE is derived from discussions and resolutions from AfrEA Conference Proceedings (2007, 2013) Bellagio Conference (2012), a landscape review of MAE sponsored by Evalpartners (2023) the international debates on evaluation and its characteristics, the decolonisation and indigenisation discourses.

PURPOSE AND CONTENT OF MAE

There is consensus that a MAE should challenge

- The current practice of designing evaluation tools without paying attention to context that is prevalent worldwide and to take the lead in recognising the African diversity that manifest itself in different cultures, religions, languages, histories, gender, ethnicity and so on.
- The extractive nature of evaluation of current evaluation practice that leaves participants wondering what exactly the community is getting out of the evaluation.
- Evaluation that shows wonderful successes of projects while the reality is completely different.
- Marginalisation of African data collection methods such as storytelling, folk lores, music, dance, oral traditions and the use of African languages.

The MAE content and or agenda should include the development of specific evaluation strategies that account for the local context that define locally sound and relevant development success measures. Evaluation should be a tool for development. MAE should address the disconnect between the way in which we think development works and the way we evaluate. That requires that evaluators become more explicit about African people's values and beliefs about development in Africa and to bring back the development discourse to evaluation when success measures are determined, and reports are written and findings disseminated. These views are fundamental in addressing the questions on what MAE evaluation is, its agenda and who sets it. One reviewer in the AfrEA concept paper of 2015 had this to say:

If the development approach is re-oriented so that community partners understand that the resources no longer belong to the "donor" but to them (the community partners), a new dynamic to evaluation will emerge. If the elements of Evaluative Thinking

are employed at the beginning of the intervention to build an evaluation component into the intervention and community partners are given the responsibility of deciding what success means to them, we will begin to see indicators that development practitioners never thought about. In Africa, communities will defend what they own and have but follow with scepticism what experts think they own.

Another dominant view is that MAE should be viewed as a trans-disciplinary concept that draws knowledge from African history, Anthropology, Political Science, Sociology, African Philosophy, African Oral Literature and African Indigenous Knowledge Systems. This is necessary to support and evaluation theory of change that capture the interconnection between the people and their environment and value systems that promote partnerships of knowledge systems. A MAE thus needs to engage African Thought Leaders from multiple disciplines and multiple knowledge systems. while the concept paper on MAE (Chilisa 2015) moved the field forward, conceptualizing MAE and preventing it from being a buzzword, there is still need for a concise definition around which a consensus may arise (Omosa 2019). Omosa (2019) has produced a working definition of MAE and defines MAE *as evaluation conducted based on AfrEA standards, using localized methods or approaches, with the aim of aligning the evaluation to the lifestyle and needs of African people and also promotes African values* Omosa: 93.

DISCORD ON A MAE

The Naming

From an analysis of the interview data and the literature, there was a minority voice that argue that it is unrealistic to name an evaluation MAE. Yantio (2012) observes as follows:

Being indigenous to Cameroon and Africa, I don't feel that what I do as a researcher is any different from what other researchers in other

settings in the developed and the developing world do. I believe that it is a false idea to use a specific name to characterise the research that indigenous researchers carry out, except to say that their research is contextualised.

One interviewee responded as follows:

.... there is no such thing as MAE, there is just evaluation carried out in a specific local context. There is just good evaluation that include elements of a certain context.... not necessarily a Made in Africa evaluation, just good evaluation that takes context into account'.

Scholars expressing this view are dominated by the fear that African perspectives may be defined in terms of the exotic, not taken up seriously and suffer marginalisation from the international evaluation discourse. This fear is unfounded because the international community of scholars is calling upon African scholars, Indigenous scholars and all those whose knowledge systems have suffered marginalisation to contribute to the discourse on global knowledge production. Some interviewee felt that the denial of the pursuit for a MAE by some African scholars could reflect colonized minds that value unidirectional borrowing of knowledge from the West; and a 'captive mind' (Alatas 2004) that is prone to uncritical imitation of Western research paradigms.

MAE AND THE DIVERSITY IN AFRICA

Evaluation practice from the no MAE perspective is also dominated by the argument that Africa is too diverse to constitute a monolithic worldview. Can we, claim a history of evaluation and a value system that is generic to Africans and therefore important for evaluation in Africa? Are there African specific practices or models for evaluation in Africa? One out of seven respondents to a questionnaire on views about a MAE, when asked what are your views on an MAE informed by an African world view, had this to say:

'Africa is too diverse to constitute a monolithic worldview in my opinion. There is no American approach to evaluation, or Canadian, or European approach, or Australian approach. Diversity is manifest in all aspects of evaluation I see no value in trying to treat African as a monolithic perspective. Each local context in Africa should be honoured and valued, that is the key point, but not some mythical generic or archetypal African perspective. It doesn't exist. Don't force it. It's not useful'

There is generally an agreement that evaluation in Africa should be contextualised to make it culturally appropriate and relevant to the needs of Africans. The debate seems to be whether scholars can originate evaluation practices and theories rooted in African worldviews and paradigms and indeed if African paradigms exist. While it may be true that there is no American approach to evaluation, or Canadian, or European approach, or Australian approach, it is common knowledge that the evaluation tree metaphor (Carden F. and Alkin M. 2012) illustrates evaluation models emanating from American and other Euro-Western histories and cultures. Take, for example, Michael Patton's utilisation-focussed evaluation model or Tyler's objective-oriented evaluation model. These models originated in the USA and are classified as intellectual property of scholars in the USA. Mertens and Wilson (2012) further situate the Tylerian evaluation models in the post-positivist paradigm while Patton's utilisation focused evaluation fit into the pragmatic paradigm, all classified as Euro-Western paradigms. Carden F. and Alkin M. (2012) go further to note the absence of evaluation theorists coming from Low- and Middle-Income countries and from Africa in the evaluation tree metaphor and urges evaluators from Low- and Middle-Income countries and from Africa to build evaluation by originating evaluation practice and potentially theories rooted in their locations. The view is however important in making it clear that the MAE is about approaches, strategies and models of evaluation emanating from evaluation practice in Africa. MAE is not a one lens approach, but an attempt to make visible, multiple evaluation approaches informed by the diversities coming out of Africa.

NOT ALL EVALUATION SHOULD BE MAE

There was also a minority view that not all evaluations should invoke the MAE principles. One interviewee had this to say:

MAE should be something that we may invoke to do some evaluations for some reason, but it should not be a process that we should mainstream or apply across board. We shouldn't say that any evaluation that takes place in Africa should be MAE. I do not see it like that. I think that we will continue to do evaluation traditionally; donors would like to do evaluations for their reasons.

This view defeats the international call for evaluators to pay attention to the role of culture in evaluation and the pursuit of culturally responsive, indigenous and postcolonial approaches that expand ways to work in diverse evaluation settings with tools and methods that expand the range and depth of approaches in the field. The MAE does not sum up one approach but shows MAE along a continuum that range from the least contextualised evaluation approaches to approaches that are dominated by Africans world views.

CONCEPTUALIZATION CHALLENGES AND MYTHS

While MAE is visible in the global discourse in evaluation and across literature from different disciplines, its conceptualization remains elusive and poses a threat to its transformative capabilities. There are many conversations taking place on what MAE should be or can be, with no final agreement made. Omosa (2019) notes that the divergent and sometimes fractured discussion about MAE has resulted in splintered understanding of the concept and misconceptions that challenge its growth. The misconceptions include the Myths of Protectionism, the Myths of Science versus Sorcery, the Myth of a Neutral Science Method, the Myth of Difference and Inventiveness versus Imitativeness and Tensions with the Adaptive approach.

Myths of Protectionism: One of the misconceptions delaying progress in embracing the MAE concept and its transformative vision is the view that MAE means ‘protectionism’ and rejecting support and approaches from the north, making MAE a ‘contender rather than an alternative or even a partner.’ Proponents of MAE and the concept paper, however, are clear that MAE is not exclusive of other knowledge systems. Another misconception is that MAE is interpreted as a one size fit all model of evaluation in Africa rather than an umbrella for frameworks that guide contextualized, localized evaluation in diverse environments and situations.

Tensions with the Adaptive approach: There is also a persistent dialogue on how to interweave conventional Northern and MAE approaches and whether it is possible in the words of one of the participants ‘to push for revolution while still ensconced in the dominant structure.’ The concern is that often, MAE is subsumed within the discourse on ‘transformative evaluation,’ where it gets lost in ‘the global challenges we are facing in the age of the Anthropocene.’ The ‘how to’ and the distinct benefit of the integration is also not visible. Mbava and Chapman (2020) highlighting the tensions in the adaptive approach note the approach ‘has limitations because the thought leadership, design and development of theories and instruments largely remain outside Africa’ but can be useful when some of the features of a Western based approach meet the requirement of a MAE (p. 7). Mbava (2017) has developed a model of an adapted realist evaluation cycle that features the Lekgotla method as the main tool for gathering qualitative data and for building relations and seeking consensus among stakeholders. The model clearly delineates ‘how to’ and the benefits of the model. It remains for evaluators to test this model in other contexts within and outside Africa.

The Myth of Difference and Inventiveness versus Imitativeness: Another concern is that MAE should make clear how it differs from ‘people-centred evaluations including participatory/stakeholder/empowerment/transformative evaluations.’ This thinking is driven

by Western essentialism and its inability to see and appreciate characteristics in other cultures that are similar to, and those that do not fit Western preconceptions. Essentialism drives the colonial binary thinking of Western/European as characterized by inventiveness and abstract thinking and non-westerners as imitators at the developmental stage of concrete thinking incapable of theorizing (Blaut, 1993). Complementing the call for difference is the view from a minority of the participants that MAE is underdeveloped as a body of knowledge, with distinct tools, techniques, and methods.' The majority of the participants are of the view that the problem is not underdevelopment, but lack of visibility perpetuated by Western hostility or indifference to other knowledge systems.

The Myths of Science versus Sorcery: In discussing the challenges of an Ubuntu driven public policy evaluation approach, Uwezeyimana (2020) notes:

Most indigenous African conceptions of causality, beliefs in magic and supernatural powers, which are associated with African indigenous philosophy of Ubuntu and communalism, cannot systematically and scientifically be proven. (p. 125)

Blaut's theory (1993) on the colonizer's model of the world demonstrated how the European theory of diffusionism has created binary opposites of Westerner/European that believes in science and the non-Westerner 'other' who believe in sorcery. The model is a powerful tool to use to deconstruct, expose, and talk back to damaged focused assumptions, prejudices and stereotypes about the 'other.' Beliefs in magical power and supernatural powers cannot be ascribed to Africans only. Rene Descartes a philosopher, mathematician, and scientist credits his methodology to a supernatural encounter during which the Spirit of truth descended upon him and possessed him (Billman, 2019). Wilhelm's Dilthey's philosophy of hermeneutics in the interpretive paradigm and its methodology of interpretation comes from the name Hermes, a god in Greek mythology who had the power to communicate the

desires of the gods to mortals (Chilisa & Preece, 2005; Neuman, 1997). Shakespeare in the book *Macbeth* showed how Lady Macbeth and the three witches plotted to kill Duncan and she, Lady Macbeth became the fourth witch. Today in the Western world plots to conquer, control and erase other knowledge systems do not happen through witchcraft but other sophisticated ways of controlling the mind that while not labelled witchcraft in reality serves the same purpose. In seeking to further understand Uwizeyimana's (2020) assertion one can interrogate the following question: Is it superstitious and therefore irrelevant to the evaluator if mothers in a given community did not pursue one of the program goals to kill chicken when they are two months old to satisfy the requirement for a nutritious meal on the grounds that it is against their culture to kill baby chickens? An evaluator steeped in the Western Baconian philosophy of empiricism will of course assign the failure of the intervention to the superstitious beliefs of the mothers. Is it superstitious and therefore irrelevant to the evaluators when a health clinic is not utilized because it was erected in a place the community considers sacred? The post-positivist view of a one reality, knowable through objective measurement will of course dismiss the communities' behaviours as ignorance perpetuated by witchcraft beliefs.

The Myth of a Neutral Science Method: There is an argument that Science is science, data in one context is data in another, and that the objectivity of the scientific method cannot be affected by the subjectivity of contextual realities. This is clearly an argument against decolonizing research and evaluation methodologies. In the last AfrEA conference as already discussed, there was a training session on the 'big four paradigms,' Post-positivism, Constructivism, Pragmatic and Transformative, and how they created codes, rules and methods on how truth can be investigated, analysed, reported and disseminated. The myth of an objective truth lies within the post-positivist paradigm and is heavily contested by the constructivists who subscribe to a socially constructed reality and subjective knowing; while in the transformative paradigm, truth is seen as a game of power relations and the pragmatist value practice that leads to change. It

is clear that the argument for a single, unchanging, knowable reality expressed above is from a post-positivist standpoint and is contested by other paradigms. What was missing from the AfrEA conference discourse as already pointed out was a discussion of an Indigenous paradigm. The assertion of a neutral science method points to the need for training on evaluation methodologies that clearly create awareness of the subjectivity of science and how evaluation models come out of diverse world views and are best applied if situated in their philosophical assumptions. Using an evaluation model without knowledge of its paradigmatic stance is like walking on a road blind folded (Chilisa 2024).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this chapter traces the evolution of Made in Africa Evaluation (MAE), highlighting its role in transforming evaluation practices across the continent. Emerging in the early 2000s as a response to externally imposed frameworks, MAE seeks to centre African values, knowledge systems, and cultural contexts in evaluation. The chapter underscores AfrEA's pivotal role in advocating for high-quality, locally driven evaluations that resonate with Africa's diverse histories and experiences. While MAE has gained traction, challenges remain, including debates over its definition, the role of African philosophy in evaluation methodologies, the integration of indigenous theories and practices with mainstream approaches, and ethical concerns around power dynamics in evaluation. These complexities emphasize the need for interdisciplinary and mixed methods approaches (Chilisa 2023) and continuous dialogue on MAE's principles, theory and practice. Moving forward, fostering collaboration among evaluators, policymakers, and communities across cultures is crucial to shaping a shared understanding of MAE. By embedding African perspectives at the core of evaluation, MAE paves the way for a more inclusive, responsive, and sustainable evaluation ecosystem across the continent.

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Section A

Epistemology and Foundations of MAE

Chapter 1

African Rooted Paradigms, Frameworks, Methods and Tools

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ABSTRACT

The chapter explores the integration of African-rooted philosophies and frameworks into evaluation practices, advocating for methodologies that align with Indigenous ontological and epistemological perspectives. It highlights the inherent conflict between prevailing Euro-Western paradigms and the needs of formerly colonized peoples. Through a synthesis of literature and commissioned reports, the authors emphasize the significant role of African philosophies in shaping evaluation theories and practice. Key contributions to the discourse are drawn from prominent scholars in the field, promoting paradigms such as the Afrocentric and post-colonial indigenous paradigm. The chapter calls for developing evaluation frameworks responsive to African contexts, histories, and communal values, ultimately aiming to transform the evaluation landscape in Africa by centering Indigenous knowledge systems and relationality in the evaluation process to ensure social justice and ethical practice.

INTRODUCTION

How can we justly address implementation and outcomes of the Sustainable Development Goals when the ontological and epistemological assumptions that drive the discipline are in conflict with Indigenous ontological and epistemological assumptions of the formerly colonized peoples of Africa and Indigenous peoples of New Zealand, Canada, Australia, and the USA? Training that continuously emphasizes Euro-western Paradigms is a threat to the growth of a MAE built on the philosophies and world views of African people and aimed at transforming evaluation in Africa. In response to the threat, a decolonization wave that is driving a call for Indigenous paradigms offers an opportunity for the growth of African-rooted evaluation and its transformative agenda. The emphasis is on evaluation that takes into account Africa's context and needs (Michelitsch, 2019). Chilisa (2020) and Chilisa and Mertens (2021) argue that the evaluation can best pay attention to the needs and context of Africans and other formerly colonized societies if it is articulated in a separate evaluation tree branch with clear philosophical assumptions that drive the evaluation process.

The discourse on the paradigms is derived from the 2015, AfrEA Commissioned report described in chapter one. The literature is triangulated and complemented by the 2022, Evalpartners Commissioned report that sought to assess the worldviews, philosophies, frameworks and principles that guide the MAE. Furthermore, a scoping review following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-analysis – PRISMA (Moher et al., 2015; Page et al., 2021) and its Extension for Scoping Reviews - PRISMA-ScR (Tricco et al., 2018) sponsored by Mastercard Foundation was conducted in 2024 to synthesis African philosophies, frameworks and tools in evaluation.

AFRICAN PHILOSOPHIES AND EVALUATION

In Africa, the role of philosophy in informing evaluation can be credited to the African Evaluation Association and its leaders. The late Sulley Gariba advocated for evaluation informed by African philosophies.

With Michael Patton he fielded the keynote address at the 4th 2007 AfrEA conference that laid the foundation for the Special Sector on Making Evaluation our Own. It was at this conference that AfrEA adopted the statement that evaluation in Africa should be informed by African philosophies, world views, experiences and history. He is one of the founding members of the MAE concept.

A synthesis of the AfrEA commissioned report (Chilisa 2015) the Evalpartners commissioned study (Chilisa 2022), and the Mastercard Foundation funded systematic review on African rooted philosophies, frameworks, and tools (Chilisa et al 2024) identified scholars who have contributed to the role of philosophy in the discourse on evaluation. The contributors are mainly from Southern and Eastern Africa. The contributors reveal how African ways of perceiving reality, knowledge systems, values, and culture inform evaluation theorising and practice in general. Assumptions about the nature of realities (ontology), knowledge (epistemology), and values (axiology). The contributors also discuss the process and methodology of how evaluation is conceptualised, from program initiation to evaluation design, analysis and interpretation, and dissemination of findings. Six African thinkers who argue for African-rooted philosophies and paradigms are highlighted as follows:

Asante (1990) proposed the Afrocentric Paradigm,
Carroll (2008) Afrikana Centered Worldview,
Muwanga-Zake, J. W, F. (2009) Ubuntu and Afrocentric paradigms,
Chilisa (2011, 2019) the Postcolonial Indigenous Paradigm,
Asante and Archibald (2023) Ubuntu, Nnobia and Sankofa,
Kane and Archibald (2023) Ubuntu and Afrofeminism

THE AFROCENTRIC PARADIGM

The role of philosophy in evaluation started in the 1990's with Molefi Kente Asante discourse on the Afrocentric paradigm. The Afrocentric paradigm epistemology is rooted in spirituality, communalism, cooperation, and morality. He also identified Ma'at and Nommo extracted from the Nile valley civilisation as the two principles intrinsic to African culture. From Maat are derived seven principles of truth, justice, rightness, propriety, harmony, order, balance, and reciprocity. Nommo explains the production of knowledge as a vehicle to improve the quality of life of the people. Mkabela (2005) went on to build on the Afrocentric paradigm, adding that Afrocentrist argue for the pluralism of philosophical views.

Methodologies derived from the Afrocentric paradigm are developed in the context of African history, culture and philosophy, for use with Africans and people of African descent. They can also serve as reference for research and evaluation with other marginalised Indigenous people because the issues addressed are common across most societies that suffered colonialism (Baugh and Guin 2006).

THE AFROCENTRIC-UBUNTU PARADIGM

The Afrocentric paradigm continues to inform research and evaluation, for example, Muwanga-Zake J. W. F. (2009), applies the principles of the Afrocentric paradigm and the Ubuntu philosophy to the evaluation of a program. He applies the Ubuntu elements of collaboration, togetherness, cooperation and consensus building in evaluation practice. He further applies the Afrocentric core principles of holding researchers and evaluators responsible for uncovering hidden, subtle and racist theories embedded in current methodologies to evaluation practice. He maintains that researchers and evaluators should take responsibility for legitimising the centrality of African ideals and maintaining inquiry rooted in strict interpretation of place.

AFRIKANA CENTRED WORLDVIEW AFRIKANA

Also linking research and evaluation to philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality, knowledge and values is Carroll (2008) whose work is intended for Africa and the Diaspora. Carroll introduced the Afrikan Centered Worldview, characterised by seven foundational assumptions guiding research and evaluation within Afrikan contexts. These assumptions encompass Afrikan Cosmology, Afrikan Ontology, African Axiology, Afrikan Epistemology, Afrikan Logic, Afrikan Ideology, and Afrikan Teleology, serving as indispensable constructs for researchers and evaluators when engaging with African populations. Collectively, Carroll's work recognises how people relate to the cosmos, the ontological connectedness of love and harmony that exists between people and the cosmos. Some of the issues that Carroll's paradigm asks researchers to consider include how the evaluation inquiry reflect on the interdependent and interconnected nature of the universe, compensate for the spiritual and material nature of reality, reflect the communal nature of African people, access the nonmaterial reality, reflect both/and logic, advance the interests of the African community, and contribute to the liberation of the African people.

THE POSTCOLONIAL INDIGENOUS PARADIGM

Chilisa is considered by some as a leading scholar on decolonizing research and evaluation in the global south Van den Berg (2023), while some Blaser-Mapitsa (2022) credit her with laying the foundation on the role of IKS as a body of thought that should inform research and evaluation methodologies. Chilisa's groundbreaking book *Indigenous research methodologies* 2011, 2019 other works Chilisa 2009, 2007, 2015, 2017, 2024, Chilisa and Preece (2005), Chilisa and Malunga 2012, Chilisa and Phatshwane 2022, Chilisa and Mertens 2021, contributed to the field of research and evaluation methodologies in four important ways. Building on Asante (1990) Baugh and Guin (2006) Chilisa's work situates IKS in Africa as a body of thought on equal footing with Western thought and

equally valuable in addressing global problems. She cites IKS as a powerful tool for inventiveness, abstract thinking, theory building and development of models and tools unique to Africa yet available and amiable for adaptation in other cultures, Western and Non-Western. She proposed a postcolonial indigenous paradigm driven by relational ontologies, epistemologies and axiologies that are derived from the ubuntu philosophy. Postcolonial theory, critical theory and race-based theory also inform the lens of a postcolonial indigenous paradigm. Chilisa has demonstrated the application of a postcolonial indigenous paradigm applying postcolonial theories and critical theory to qualitative research and evaluation methodologies (Chilisa and Phatshwane (2022) and to mixed methods (Chilisa 2024). She also proposed ethical principles based on relational ontology and epistemologies (Chilisa 2022, Chilisa and Mertens 2022).

She goes further to argue that a postcolonial indigenous paradigm shares common assumptions about the nature of reality, knowledge, and values with Indigenous peoples of Canada, New Zealand, and other societies that suffered European slavery and colonisation. Building on this thinking, she proposed a fifth branch in the metaphorical evaluation tree that she called the context and needs branch. Relationality, spirituality, context, and conceptualising evaluation from the initial design of the program and applying a decolonial lens are the unique characteristics of the context needs and priorities branch. Chilisa discusses the relational ontology, epistemology and axiological assumption as follows:

Relational Ontology

Among the Bantu people, there is recognition of an I/We relationship as opposed to the I/You, which emphasises the individual at the expense of the majority. This principle is captured under the philosophy of *Ubuntu*. An *Ubuntu* philosophy expresses an ontology that addresses relations among people, relations with the living and the non-living, and a spiritual existence that promotes love and harmony among peoples and communities (Chilisa 2005, 2012). This African way of perceiving reality comes out more clearly when addressing the nature of being. The common answer on what is being comes out in the adage

I am because we are, I am a person through other persons I am we; I am because we are; we are because I am, I am in you, you are in me. The 'we' includes the living and the non-living thus an African reality includes a spiritual and a material existence (Carroll 2008). African ontology recognises peoples' relations to the cosmos, an interdependent interconnectedness that promotes peace, love and harmony. The implication for evaluation research methodology is that all areas of culture, living experience and indigenous knowledge systems must be used to conceptualise the realities to be evaluated and to come up with techniques through which these realities can be known.

Relational epistemology

A relational epistemology draws our attention to relational forms of knowing as opposed to the Euro-Western theories on ways of knowing that emphasise individual descriptions of knowing (Thayer Bacon 2003). Knowing is something that is socially constructed by people who have relationships and connections with each other, with the environment, the spirits of the ancestors and the living and the non-living. The African epistemology is oriented towards an Affect-Symbolic-Imagery such that an affective oriented evaluator studies reality through the interaction of affect and symbolic imagery (Carroll 2008). Emphasis is on the use of words, gestures, dance, song, rhythm, well-established general beliefs, concepts, and theories of particular people, which are stored in their language, practices, rituals, proverbs, revered traditions, myths and folktales to access or convey meaning (Carroll 2008, Chilisa 2012). These modes of knowing are the basis for the choice of methods for accessing a reality that has a connection with the knower and a means of verification of this reality.

Relational Axiology

Axiology refers to the nature of values and attempts to answer the question what do we value? The value system of most African societies is built around respect for others and oneself. This respect is

built around the concept '*humanness or personhood*' (Segobye 2000:3) or respect. A relational axiology that is embedded in the Ubuntu relational ontology principles of (1) I am we; I am because we are: (2) relations of people with the living and the non-living; and (3) spirituality, love, harmony and community building (Chilisa 2012). There is emphasis on values grounded in cooperation, collective responsibilities, cooperation and interdependence and interpersonal relationships among people as the highest value (Carroll 2008). From these principles, an ethical framework emerges with an emphasis on accountable responsibilities of researchers and evaluators and respectful relationships between the researchers and evaluators, and the participants that take account of the participants' web of relationships with the living and the non-living. These value orientations also influence the evaluation theory of change, criteria or standards, indicators of success or failure of projects and conclusions about the worth or merit of programs, policies or projects.

They complement these principles and add valuable dimensions emanating from African philosophical assumptions on relationality. Whereas the UNGE ethical principles emphasize the role of the individual-the evaluator, these principles, based on an I/we relationship places responsibility of a successful evaluation process on all stakeholders, including beneficiaries, funders, and commissioners.

1. **RELATIONALITY:** The emphasis is on belongingness, togetherness, interdependence, collectiveness, love, harmony and relationships of humans with each other and with earth-creation. There is emphasis on valuing community strength and building community relationships to inform research or evaluation intent, motive, and methodology. Implicit in this principle is the need for healing of communities. The 'hand in hand' is a method based on the principle of relationality that serves to build relationships and coalitions for working together during the evaluation.
2. **RESPONSIBILITY:** It is about the role of a researcher or evaluator in pursuing social, economic, and environmental

justice, resisting dominant ideologies that silence local communities and community ideologies that discriminate on the basis of gender, class, ethnicity, race, ableness, age etc.; and contributing to, unity, and harmony within the community and of all stakeholders' responsibility in playing their roles.

3. REVERENCE: Indigenous research recognizes the critical nature of spirituality and values it as an important contribution to ways of knowing. Many Indigenous people place value on sacred sites and spiritual practices. The evaluator or researcher applying a relationality lens needs to figure out what is revered, how they will participate in it and how it will inform interpretation of their findings and feed into a radical change of program development, design, planning and implementation.
4. RECIPROCITY: Whose development program is it? Who initiated it and how will they benefit from it? Who will hear and learn from it? These are fundamental questions that address the pitfall of colonial research that serves the interests of the funders and commissioners. Requiring evaluators to pay attention to who initiated the program helps to hold governments accountable to their citizens instead of serving as an easy market for projects floating in the North.
5. RESPECTFUL (representation): Respect requires that the process, from the initiation of the research, the questions asked, the methodology, the data-collection procedures, and the reporting and dissemination of the report, is guided by the community and that the community has ownership and access to the data collected. This should include the evaluator's recognition of Indigenous knowledge holders' specialist knowledge and their contribution to the knowledge production and respect for diversity (Evalpartners, 2021).
6. REFLEXIVITY: The principle of reflexivity requires evaluators and commissioners and all stakeholders to continuously reflect on their position within existing powers and ensure that the evaluation will address the priority needs of communities.

Radical change can happen if evaluation ethics direct donors and commissioners to reflect on current practice in Africa where evaluation too often provides performance assessment compliance and accountability functions for donors and commissioners at the expense of the learning agenda and relational knowing.

7. **RESPONSIVITY:** Responsiveness is the ability of researchers or evaluators to learn from the process, recognize the evolving changes, and adapt their approaches and methodologies to become the change agent, and ensure a context based, and culturally sensitive and appropriate evaluation process. South to south evaluation approaches are to play a critical role in transforming program design, planning and implementation. Evaluators under this principal question ‘learning’ for whom. Under the conventional model the evaluator’s role main role is to provide performance assessment for funders and commissioners and perform compliance and accountability functions, not communal learning.
8. **RIGHTS AND REGULATIONS:** This calls for ethical protocols that accord communities the rights and opportunities to prioritize their needs, claim and guard against misappropriation of Indigenous knowledge and have the rights to confidentiality.

DECOLONIZATION and decoloniality: This calls evaluators to resist the blind borrowing of Western theories, conceptual frameworks, and methodologies, and to adapt these methodologies and theories where necessary to make them contextually and culturally relevant. When done well, adaptation leads to new method theories that are African-rooted. It calls for decolonization of self and cultivation of knowledge through the formation of coalitions See Table 1 show elements of post-colonial indigenous research paradigm.

Table 1: *Postcolonial Indigenous research paradigm*

Reason for doing the research	To challenge deficit thinking and pathological descriptions of the formerly colonized and reconstruct a body of knowledge that carries hope and promotes transformation and social change among the historically oppressed
Philosophical underpinnings	Informed by indigenous knowledge systems, critical theory, postcolonial discourses, feminist theories, critical race-specific theories, and neo- Marxist theories
Ontological assumptions	Socially constructed multiple realities shaped by the set of multiple connections that human beings have with each other, the environment, the cosmos, the living, and the non-living
Place of values in the research process	All research must be guided by a relational accountability that promotes respectful representation, reciprocity, and rights of the researched. The ethics theory is informed by appreciative inquiry and desire-based perspectives
Nature of knowledge	Knowledge is relational, as is all the indigenous knowledge systems built on relations
What counts as truth	It is informed by the set of multiple relations that one has with the universe
Methodology	Participatory, liberatory, and transformative research approaches and methodologies that draw from indigenous knowledge systems, anchored in relationship building and peoples' connectedness with each other and the environment, values the physical, the spiritual, the emotional, historical, social, and the ideological aspect of the research phenomena
Techniques of gathering data	Techniques based on relationship building and connectedness of people with each and with the environment, ethnophilosophy, language frameworks, indigenous knowledge systems, talk stories, and talk circles; songs, rituals and adapted techniques from the other four paradigms

Adapted from Chilisa B (2019) *Indigenous Research methodologies*, London, Sage.

OTHER PHILOSOPHIES

Ethno-philosophy, philosophic sagacity, national ideological philosophy, African logic and teleology are additional aspects of African worldviews that can enrich the articulation of a relational evaluation paradigm and its methodologies.

Ethno-philosophy: It has been described as a system of thought that articulates analysis and attempt to understand the collective worldviews of diverse African peoples as a unified form of knowledge (Emagalit, 2001; Chilisa 2005). According to this philosophy knowledge are the experiences of the people encoded in their language, folklore, stories, songs, culture, values and experiences. The language, stories, songs and folklore are the banks where the knowledge is stored and can be retrieved to inform theory and practice in evaluation for example. Easton (2012), for instance, has originated ways to contextualise five common evaluation concepts based on proverbs. Community spirit, cooperation, collectiveness, democracy and consensus building are the values espoused through this philosophy (Chilisa 2005).

Nationalistic-ideological philosophy: This is a political philosophy represented through the thinking of Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Leopold Senghor and Thabo Mbeki and more visible through the African renaissance and Africanisation concepts. The African renaissance is supposed to have originated from Mbeki's declaration in 1998 'I am an African' (Nabudere 2002) and expressed through nationalist movements such as Pan Africanism and Black Consciousness (Prah 1999, Mamdani 1999). African renaissance has been defined as a re-awakening of mind that is driven by '*an African intelligentsia that includes all those who drive creative thought and frame debates, whether in the arts or culture, whether in philosophical or social thought*' (Mamdani (1999:130). It is a search for identity, a redefinition and re-evaluation of the self and of Africa in the context of a globalising world. Makogoba, Shope and Mazwani, 1999 have defined as:

The African Renaissance as a unique opportunity for Africans to define ourselves and our agenda according to our own realities and considering the

realities of those around us. It's about Africans being agents of history and master of our destiny, Africa is in a transformation mode. The renaissance is about Africa reflection and African redefinition.

Along with the African renaissance concept is the Africanisation concept which refers to '*a process of placing the African worldview at the centre of analysis*' (Teffo, 2000: 107). It can be viewed as an empowerment tool directed towards the mental decolonisation, liberation and emancipation of Africans, so that they do not see themselves only as objects of research and consumers or borrowers of knowledge, but also as producers of knowledge capable of theorising about the production of knowledge in ways embedded in the cultures and experiences of the African peoples (Chilisa 2005).

African Teleology: A sense of directedness towards definite ends and definite purpose which in turn compels commitment to a given goal. The implication for evaluation is that the evaluation inquiry must question the relevance and functionality of a program, project or policy.

African Logic: The emphasis is on a di-unital logic as opposed to the either/or logic common in Euro-American thought.

AFRICAN ROOTED EVALUATION: COMMON PRINCIPLES

African rooted evaluation paradigms and frameworks have the following elements:

1. African Histories. These enable evaluators to understand the origins of African people and how these origins have over the years influenced how African people generate their ways of knowing and conduct evaluations in their contexts.
2. African Ontologies. These are informed by African philosophies, for example, the philosophy of Ubuntu. The philosophy of Ubuntu recognizes how African people relate

with each other, their environment and the cosmos. It promotes interdependence and interconnectedness centred on the spirit of peace, love and harmony. The ontologies guide evaluators to understand how to conduct evaluations that are relevant and promote community relationships.

3. African Epistemologies: They are also informed by African philosophies. Drawing from the Ubuntu philosophy for example, knowing is something that is socially constructed by people who have relationships and connections with each other, with the environment, the spirits of the ancestors and the living and the non-living. The epistemologies guide evaluators on what counts as knowledge and towards inclusive and more just and ethical practices in evaluation.
4. African Axiologies: They also draw from African philosophies. They focus on the values and principles that guide most African communities. The concept of humanness, interconnectedness and relationship building is at the centre of African Axiologies and inform ethical evaluation practices.
5. African Cosmology: It is rooted in African knowledge and understanding of the universe and sacred or spiritual interactions in African communities. African Cosmology should ground African evaluations to clearly understand the inner working of African communities.
6. African Ideology: It is a set of values and principles that guide African people particularly in relationship to development and evaluations in Africa. The African Renaissance ideology and Africanisation concept prioritize African-based solutions to African development challenges
7. African Teleology: It includes the incorporation of African environmental ethics in evaluations.
8. African Logic: It informs how evidence in evaluation is viewed. Evidence is more inclusive and not a search for a contrast, where it is either this or that, but a process that embraces all voices to come to a communal conclusion.

9. Contextually Relevant Evaluation. The emphasis is on ensuring that evaluators understand and implement context in their evaluation and interactions with the communities. Often the challenge is in what context entails. Context entails how a material and non-material reality is built into the evaluation process. The spirituality context framework described in this chapter features five principles, namely, the people, environment, place, space, and time as guiding factors that can lead to a holistic approach to contextualising evaluation.
10. Mutual Respect for Communities: It requires recognition and respect of the cultural values, norms, and beliefs of African communities. The recognition that cultural values, norms and beliefs exist can help to situate the evaluation in the very culture in which the project is implemented. This ensures culturally responsive and equitable evaluation.
11. Stakeholder, engagement, participation, involvement and ownership of projects. The Evaluations must be inclusive of all stakeholders. The Engagement, Participation, Involvement, and Ownership (EPIO) framework described in this chapter provides a unique Afrocentric framework for planning, managing and evaluating projects that lead to people-centered solutions, ownership and sustainability of projects.
12. African Feminist approaches: Reviewing the community through an African Feminist lens ensures that women are not included as a by-product, but it also ensures that the complexities of gender are taken into account in the evaluation.
13. Transformative Approaches: Tools, methods, frameworks and paradigms promote social justice, ethical practice and contribute to development projects that transform people's lives and lead to better livelihoods.

Source: B. Chilisa, W. Nderitu, R. Nabbumba, B Koyabe, F. Mwaijande, J. Govender, T. Major, S. Koloi-Keaikitse, M. Ramasobana, M. Frehiwot, M. Gaotlhobogwe, Pheko, B (2024) *Mapping African-rooted Evaluation frameworks and tools*. Research funded by the Mastercard Foundation

Table 2: Africa-rooted Evaluation Frameworks

Evaluation Framework	The Argument	Key Tenants	Philosopher
Responsive Evaluation	It is a framework rooted in African philosophies, theories and knowledge systems	Relational networks; Ubuntu ideals and harmony	Boadu and Ile, 2019
Indigenously Responsive Evaluation	Premised on tangible and intangible evaluative dimensions deeply rooted in cultural values and norms within the indigenous communities.	Cultural values, sayings, maxims, norms, local social patterns	Boadu and Ile, 2022
Culturally Responsive Evaluation (CRE)	The argument is that evaluative impulses are embedded in indigenous relational structures, values, and other cultural realities.	Relationality Cultural values Other Cultural realities	Boadu and Ile, 2023
The Ideal Community Development Evaluation	Built on five Ubuntu principles being sharing and collective ownership of opportunities, responsibilities and challenges, relationships over things, participatory decision making and leadership.	People-centric Sharing, Collective ownership, Responsibility Relationships, Participation	Chilisa and Mulunga (2012)

Table 2: Africa-rooted Evaluation Frameworks (Continued)

Evaluation Framework	The Argument	Key Tenants	Philosopher
Adaptive Evaluation Frameworks	Emphasis is on the adaptation of Western evaluation models, theories, and instruments to make them contextually relevant, culturally appropriate, and inclusive of local stakeholders and African evaluators.	Adaptation of western evaluation models, theories and instruments	Carden and Alkin (2012)
The African Evaluation Model	Focuses on restoration, revitalization, retribution, and protection of African identities and values to address historical injustices within Indigenous African communities.	Restoration, Revitalisation, Retribution, Protection of African identities and values, Decolonisation, Indigenisation and Justice	Gaotlhobogwe, Major, Koloi-Keaitse, & Chilisa (2016)
Realist Evaluation for Made in Afr Source: Research funded by the Mastercard Foundation Ica	Considers that an intervention is effective because of the decision-making of programme participants. It illustrates and exposes the importance of the value system of the participants.	Contextual environments, Traditional belief systems and Africa-centric evaluation perspective	Mbava and Chapman, (2020)

Source: B. Chilisa, W. Nderitu, R. Nabbumba, B Koyabe, F. Mwaijande, J. Govender, T. Major, S. Koloi-Keaitse, M. Ramasobana, M. Frehiwot, M. Gaotlhobogwe, Pheko, B (2024) Mapping African rooted Evaluation frameworks and tools.

AFRICA ROOTED EVALUATION FRAMEWORKS

Whilst there are frameworks developed to guide evaluation in indigenous science evaluation elsewhere in the world, African philosophers have come up with frameworks which they believe are appropriate for use in African contexts. Table 2 below shows the evolution of some of the evaluation frameworks in Africa and their key argument points, as well as African scholars championing them.

Recently, the PanAfrican Indigenous Evaluation Consortium co-created, co-designed and pilot-tested five evaluation frameworks as follows:

The five frameworks that will be pilot tested are:

1. ***Spirituality Framework***: People, Environment, Place, Space, Time (PEPST). The framework contributes to the development of a holistic understanding of a contextualized evaluation rooted in the understanding of a world that is interconnected, spiritual, and seeking balance and harmony. The framework centers on five principles, namely: people, environment, place, space and time and how they should guide the meaning of context and power negotiations in project planning and evaluation to maintain balance and harmony and thus contribute to community ownership and sustainability of projects. These principles are anchored on six pillars, namely, Connectedness and Harmony, 2) Preservation of the sacred, 3) Mutual respect and humility 4) Sensitivity to cultural norms and values of any group, 5) Responsibility and accountability to and by members of the society and 6) Relational coexistence and relational power. The framework can guide project initiation, design, implementation and project monitoring and impact evaluation.
2. ***Pamoja Safarini Indigenous Theory of Practice***. The Pamoja Theory of Practice presents an indigenous theory of change informed by African philosophies, values, culture and

experiences. It has seven principles that guide the theory of change: Umoja, Sankofa, Njiani, Holistic outlook, visual depiction, Dhani, and Maono. The Theory of Practice can be applied across all the phases of any policy, portfolio, program or project. The framework promotes a design journey and process geared to achieve sustainable development and is heavily reliant on and should be informed by the community's indigenous aspirations and goals and underpinned by the triad principle of partnership, inclusion and mutual support.

3. ***The Engagement, Participation, Involvement, and Ownership (EPIO)*** provides a unique Afrocentric framework for planning, managing and evaluating projects that lead to people-centered solutions, ownership and sustainability of projects. It emphasizes social responsibility which entails fostering genuine collaboration, ensuring inclusiveness, promoting shared accountability, and empowering communities to take ownership of their development while honoring their cultural values, knowledge systems, and collective aspirations.
4. ***Ngwanake***: is a youth-empowered framework, that engages youth in merging Technology with Indigenous knowledge to facilitate better youth participation. The framework includes participatory design of project theory, monitoring and evaluation tools and methods with a focus on cultural grounding, usefulness and inclusion of youth in African programs. It focuses on youth evaluation capacity strengthening; anchored on Ubuntu Philosophical underpinnings and the integration of youth-friendly technology. The framework may be used during goals and objectives setting, project design and implementation, and evaluation execution.
5. ***Community-Based Language Evaluation Tool***: It contributes to initiating, designing and implementing projects in a manner that is aligned to the norms, beliefs and practices of African people for increased ownership, impact and sustainability

of project interventions. The CoLABEV advocates for voice, participation, inclusiveness, unity, relations, respect, connectedness and wellness in interventions. In the pilot testing phase, we shall focus on proverbs which are widely entrenched in most African communities. The framework may be used at all stages of the project evaluation cycle and more especially at project design and implementation, and evaluation execution. It enables cultural grounding of project planning, management and evaluation, helping youth and communities to build relationships and engage in collective action and promoting unity.

Source: B. Chilisa, W. Nderitu, R. Nabbumba, B Koyabe, F. Mwaijande, J. Govender, T. Major, S. Koloi-Keaikitse, M. Ramasobana, M. Frehiwot, M. Gaotlhobogwe, Pheko, B (2024)

AFRICAN ROOTED DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND TOOLS

Methods and tools within African Rooted Evaluations can be understood as processes and practices to collect and collate knowledge and information embedded within the cultural identity, beliefs, and values of African communities. While evaluations have historically applied and documented Eurocentric methods and tools within Indigenous African-Rooted Evaluations, such as standard data collection processes, there exist indigenous, culturally characterized methods and tools that are intrinsically rooted in African traditions. The methods can be expressed in four categories, namely: storytelling, conversations, decision-making and review, and spirituality. Table 3 describes the categories, and a summary of African Rooted Methods and Tools Identified is shown in Table 4.

Table 3: *Categories of African Rooted Methods*

Story Telling	Storytelling using dance, drawing and music dominates the examples shared by respondents and is frequently mentioned in the literature. However, no clear processes and examples have been curated. Most Significant Change and Impact Stories do share some guidance but are not African rooted. Storytelling can be adapted to be used for qualitative information gathering, and sourcing info on sensitive topics or those that are hard to describe.
Conversations	Methods of convening and facilitating conversations with community leaders and other key stakeholders are described as a means to engage on problems affecting the community. The processes of the Lekgotla in Southern Africa and Baraza in East Africa, is one such example of a standard practice that ensures inclusivity, structure and resolution in addressing matters of importance to the community.
Decision and review	The processes that commence marriage or other family decisions have varied practices in Africa (Itara, Magadi), but all hold a set of steps that facilitate decision-making and allow two or more parties to engage on matters related to a household. This smaller group practice may be employed in activities related to monitoring family units or householders and allows for learning and decision-making.
Phaso (expresses spirituality)	A spiritual process of communicating with the ancestors for goodwill and or expressing gratitude. Many communities in Africa have a way of welcoming visitors in this context, researchers and evaluators. There are also spiritual ways of accessing sacred places, where, for example, the intervention is located in a sacred place.

Table 4: Summary of African Rooted Methods and Tools Identified.

Method/Tool	Source	Description
Integrated-acquisition technique	Ajibade (2009)	Collecting farmer's cultural characteristics, perception and decision-making processes on environmental changes
Systematic harvesting protocols	Styger et al (2010)	Farming harvest monitoring measures in Mali.
Lekgotla and Magadi,	Mzondi (2022)	Southern Africa - processes leveraging the African Indigenous Knowledge System, outlining steps for describing a problem, participation, consensus and presentation
Made in Africa Evaluation in social work	Tuggle et al	Liberian social work faculty and staff, self-determination, acknowledgment and positioning of local indigenous knowledge in the evaluation process
Ethnophilosophy	Easton, P. B. (2012)	Applying ethnophilosophy, Easton originated five ways to conceptualise five evaluation concepts based on proverbs used in Nigeria, Est Africa and Senegal
Afro-centric teaching evaluation mode	Chapman S, et al (2021)	Embed African clients, students and instructors in the evaluation co-knowledge creation
Arts folktales, music, and dance and drawings	Chilisa et al (2025) Mapping African rooted frameworks and tools	Storytelling data collection. Where arts, folktales, music and dance, generational passing down of knowledge are all acknowledged and appreciated. Used in interviews to convey experiences.
Itara	J Govender (2025)	Traditionally and now the parents and close relatives of a lady usually visit the groom's family to assess if he is capable and able to sustain their daughter. In some cultures this is called "Itara" this is an example of an assessment/ evaluation in marriage

Source: B. Chilisa, W. Nderitu, R. Nabbumba, B Koyabe, F. Mwaijande, J. Govender, T. Major, S. Koloi-Keaititse, M. Ramasobana, M. Frehiwot, M. Gaothobogwe, Pheko, B (2024) Mapping African rooted approaches. Research funded by the MasterCard Foundation.

CONCLUSION

The chapter has highlighted African rooted philosophies and their assumptions about the nature of reality, knowledge and values and how these are shaping evaluation theory and practice. A detailed discussion of a postcolonial indigenous paradigm, its philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality, knowledge values is presented. The chapter further discussed emerging African rooted evaluation frameworks, methods and tools.

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Chapter 2

Akonta: Examining the Epistemology and Ontology of Made in Africa Evaluation

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INTRODUCTION¹

Evaluation in Africa is dependent on external methods and theories that populate classrooms, evaluation associations and work plans. As mentioned by Van Rensberg and Loye (2021), most of the materials and methodologies are built in the Global North. These theories and methods have been developed and refined in societies with different historical, cultural, economic and political realities (Frehiwot 2019; Uwizeyimana 2020). This is particularly significant because of the value placed by international, continental and national funding agencies on evaluation. The competitive and capitalistic nature of monitoring and evaluation globally impacts evaluation practices and approaches across Africa (Chilisa et al. 2016). The controversial nature of evaluation in Africa is not new to African evaluators, particularly members of the African Evaluation Association (AfrEA). This conflict fueled debates and struggles about the importance of developing Africa-centred evaluation practices.

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Collective discussions on the role of African culture and evaluation practices dominated academic spaces, conferences and academia in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Made in Africa Evaluation (MAE) came to life as a response to the collective discussions on decolonising evaluation in Africa. The first mention of MAE was recorded in 2007 at the AfrEA conference in Niger, in which the organisers provided opportunities for participants to debate, discuss and strategise how to decolonise evaluation in Africa (Chilisa 2015). Chilisa (2015:14) defines MAE as '[a] decolonized MAE approach is thus African-people centred, values culturally relevant and indigenized evaluation processes and methodologies predominately informed by African worldviews and paradigms'. Since the initial conversations about MAE as a method and theory in 2007, its importance has continued to gain traction and occupy space as a viable alternative to conducting evaluations strictly using evaluative tools developed outside of Africa. However, MAE struggles to be positioned as the primary evaluative tool. It is incorporated as an add-on to the formal evaluation methods. It occupies an outside position and is not viewed as a viable method or theory that can stand on its own without the support of the Western evaluation canon.

This research interrogates the epistemology and ontology of MAE. There are several definitions and understanding of epistemology and ontology, but this article will adopt Chilisa et al.'s (2016) definition in which they refer to epistemology and ontology in a manner that suggests that each community has a responsibility to develop their own knowledge based on their social, cultural and political conditions. These two concepts are defined as follows (Chilisa et al. 2016):

Culture is lived realities (the nature of ontology), knowledge systems (epistemology), and values (axiology). There is compelling reason to debate the assumptions about the nature of reality (ontology), knowledge (epistemology), and values (axiology) that inform evaluation inquiry and practice. (p. 314)

Despite the Made in Africa campaign, championed by AfrEA and key African evaluators, evaluation and research conducted in Africa

is largely grounded using Eurocentric epistemologies. The evaluation landscape across the continent is in flux and can be brought into focus with a deep dive on the role of MAE as a method and theory. Made in Africa evaluation can represent both a theory and a method because of its flexibility and use by practitioners. Contemporary views on the relevance and implementation of MAE vary based on the positionality of the evaluator, association or international body. The ability of MAE to be imagined by evaluators, academics and the community strengthens its ability to operate in multiple communities across Global Africa. Some evaluators point to the importance of incorporating indigenous knowledge and culturally responsive methods into the evaluation process, while others suggest that evaluation in Africa must be decolonised (Easton 2012; Samuels & Ryan 2011; Tarsilla 2014). This elasticity of MAE can be viewed as a vulnerability when comparing MAE to internationally recognised methods and theories.

Evaluation in Africa is often based on an epistemology and/or ontology that is aligned to a Western understanding of evaluation, culture and Africa's positionality globally. The epistemology and ontology of MAE are rarely part of discussions, debates and research as they are as auxiliary to internationally recognised methods and theories. The evolution of MAE as a driving force in African evaluation is contingent upon multiple factors, including ensuring that epistemology and ontology are central to debates and discussions. This research seeks to contribute to the debates, discussions and knowledge production on MAE by interrogating its epistemology and ontology. The research is based on two interrelated questions, namely, how the epistemology and ontology of MAE impact the execution of the method in contemporary evaluations, and what the viability is of the mainstream evaluation field adopting MAE as a method and theory for evaluations in Africa. This chapter is divided into four distinct but interconnected sections. The first section is the introduction; the second section focuses on methodological considerations and the conceptual framework; the third section presents the findings, and the last section discusses the way forward from MAE to pan- African evaluation and concluding thoughts.

CONCEPTUALISING AFRICAN EVALUATION

The conceptual framework for this chapter draws linkages between evaluation, knowledge production, culture and epistemic injustice. Culture is the root of many societies, and it contributes to the development of educational institutions, political and economic systems and evaluative practices. Touré (1978) defines culture as follows:

Culture is the sum of gains, knowledge and modes of action enabling man to regulate his conduct, his relationship with other men (women), and his (her) relationship with nature; it is through culture that society creates and develops and expresses itself; it defines the level of general consciousness, technical and technological capability, the modes of organization, the principles of action, and the objectives which guide society in its struggle for an ever new and brighter future. (p. 9)

The evolution and continued transformation of culture across Global Africa impacts the types of projects funded and those that are the subject of evaluations. It also dictates the epistemology and ontology of MAE either by legitimising or by delegitimising it as a method or theory. The culture of every society directly and indirectly influences the production of knowledge. The curricula and features of most institutions that train evaluators use teaching and learning models that are laced with Eurocentric and colonial values, culture and content (Auriacombe & Cloete 2019; Cloete 2016). Knowledge production which is essentially epistemology, is impacted by history, culture and the political economy. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2021) argues that epistemology can be used to bolster the uneven power relations that exist between the Global North and the Global South. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2021) contends that politics of knowledge production cannot be discussed without engaging with the impact of colonialism, neocolonialism and imperialism on Africa.

To examine the epistemology and ontology of evaluation, it is important to appreciate the epistemic injustice of knowledge production globally. Epistemic injustice emerged formally in 2007 with

Miranda Fricker's innovative book *Epistemic Injustice: Power & Ethics of Knowing*. Fricker identified two critical ways in which epistemic injustice occurred: testimonial and hermeneutical injustice (Byskov 2021; Fricker 2007). Testimonial epistemic injustice is an injustice that emerges when a hearer accredits a lower level of credibility to the words or knowledge that a knower delivers (Bhakuni & Abimbola 2021). Hermeneutical epistemic injustice according to Medina (2017:41), 'is the phenomenon that occurs when the intelligibility of communicators is unfairly constrained or undermined, obstacles'. The literature that has been produced since its inception challenged epistemic injustice to include larger systematic components of epistemic injustice. Göktürk (2021) contends that epistemic injustice directly results in social injustice in the lives of individuals and the larger community. Ndofirepi and Gwaravanda (2019) suggest that epistemic injustice exists in African universities and places of knowledge production through the domination of Eurocentric knowledge. Most of the foundational evaluation texts and theories are developed in the Global North. An over-reliance on methods and theories from the Global North silences African communities and evaluators. The retelling of the history of evaluation in Africa is a perfect example of this silencing. This is epistemic injustice, both internally and externally, which situates the history of evaluation in Africa as a by-product of Western evaluation.

Epistemic injustice also includes institutional injustice, which accounts for the inequality of the global economy. Byskov (2021) contends that there are three additional types of epistemic injustice. The stakeholder condition suggests that for one 'to be unjustifiably discriminated against as a knower, they must be somehow affected by the decisions that they are excluded from influencing' (Byskov 2021:3). African evaluators rarely have a voice in the development of the initial project or the features of the evaluation. Many of these evaluators also experience stakeholder epistemic injustice. The social justice condition contends that 'to be unjustifiably discriminated against as a knower, they must at the same time also suffer from other social injustices' (Byskov 2021). The epistemology of evaluation, in general, is connected to global inequalities. International development agencies that invest in African

development and evaluations are complicit in the very issues they are purporting to solve. The effects of the structural adjustment programme are the impetus for education, health, employment and infrastructure challenges facing most African countries. To combat these imbalances, international development agencies pump money into local communities using an epistemology based on the Western canon and evaluate said programmes based on external evaluative tools. The dependence or false dependence of Africa on the Global North to ‘develop’ further exacerbates the over- reliance on the Western evaluation canon. This school of thought promotes what Freire (1985) identifies as a *culture of silence* in which:

The dependent society is by definition a silent society. Its voice is not an authentic voice, but merely an echo of the voice of the metropolis - in every way, the metropolis speaks, the dependent society listens. (p. 73)

The culture of silence is present in all societies with a history of slavery, colonialism and neocolonialism. Evaluators and evaluation firms contribute to maintaining the culture of silence through adopting evaluation practices that discount the agency of African communities. The contemporary evaluation field promotes what Chilisa et al. (2016) identify as ‘epistemological imperialism’, in which evaluators reinforce the colonial narrative and its impact on development (Cloete 2016). These historical and contemporary conditions directly impact the epistemology and ontology of global evaluation.

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The project examined existing literature and primary source documents that tackle the epistemology and ontology of MAE. The researcher conducted a thorough review of literature as the primary methodology. According to Snyder (2019), literature reviews can be robust methodologies that not only support existing research projects but can also be the

main source of material (Snyder 2019). Ward, House and Hamer (2009) discuss the importance of knowledge transfer using existing literature on research. This is particularly relevant to this project, as it uses existing literature to examine the epistemology and ontology of MAE. Frels and Onwuegbuzie (2016) argue that the use of a comprehensive literature review enables the researcher to find meaning-making in diverse resources, including but not limited to book chapters, scholarly articles and response and review articles.

The literature focused on two key themes, namely African evaluation and MAE. This research focused on articles published between 2006 and 2021, with a special focus on the initial documents, including the 2015 AfREA- commissioned white paper on MAE. These canon texts formed the foundation for the examination of the epistemology and ontology of MAE. The sample consisted of 30 scholarly articles, book chapters and white papers published by practitioners in the classroom and in the field. The articles were collected from two main scholarly resources: Google Scholar and humanities databases such as EBSCO and African Journals Online (AJOL). The literature was examined and evaluated for its connection and relevance to MAE and potential contributions to the field. The literature was generally written by African (black) writers based on the African continent. However, a handful of articles were written by members of academia in the Global North. Methodologically, the researcher focused on African authors to include the work of African academics affiliated with institutions based on the African continent.

Findings

This section presents the two main findings of the article. The findings attempt to provide some critical thoughts about the research questions that guided this project. The questions interrogated how the epistemology and ontology of MAE impact the execution of the method in contemporary evaluations and its viability in the mainstream evaluation field in Africa. The findings do not follow the standard ethnographic format but rather provide an account of the relationship between the

movement for decolonisation and MAE and present the challenges and opportunities of MAE.

Decolonisation and Made in Africa Evaluation

The epistemology and ontology of MAE can be traced to collective calls for independence and liberation during anticolonial struggles. These calls included a campaign to decolonise formal and informal education. The Africanisation of education for countries like Ghana and Nigeria was part and parcel of their development plans (Frehiwot 2015). Expanding higher education as an act of liberation was one of the first agenda items for most countries across the continent. Poe (2007) tackles the impact of Kwame Nkrumah and other Africanists on decolonising knowledge production and the university in Africa. African culture is at the centre of Poe's argument, in which he suggests that there is a dialectical relationship between culture and time. He contends that culture is an active and evolving phenomenon that transforms while time moves forward (Poe 2007). The notion that culture in Africa evolves despite interruptions suggests that evaluation practices have also evolved. African communities have a record of evaluative and dispute resolution practices particularly in 'traditional' institutions. Poe (2007) argues that there were extensive civilisations before slavery and colonialism which engaged in complex relationships that required some sort of evaluation.

These communities' expansion and continued engagement required evaluative practices that were not recorded in Western texts but retained through indigenous knowledge preservation practices. Several pan-African philosophers have outlined methods for evaluating Africa's liberation and development. Nkrumah (1969), in his book *The Handbook of Revolutionary Warfare*, outlined a zonal analysis aimed at evaluating the African states for their liberatory characteristics. Touré (1978) in *Strategy and Tactics of the Revolution*, Diop (2012) in *Black Africa: The Economic and Cultural Basis for a Federated State* and Cabral (1979) in *Unity and Struggle* provide proposals for developing pan-African evaluation theory and practice. Academics, activists and social actors

have called for decolonising higher education using African culture. Over the last 60 years, these calls have been muted in some circles but have continued to stay dominant in academia, particularly in Africa and Latin America.

Communities across the continent have continued to contribute to development and evaluation. The adoption of the philosophy of *ubuntu*, particularly in Southern Africa, created equitable and evaluative communities (Uwizeyimana 2020). The field of evaluation which has epistemological roots in the Global North that align with the values and principles of global finance. Notwithstanding the Eurocentric epistemology of evaluation, African evaluators and associations have continued to theorise and engage with African evaluation practices.

Challenges and opportunities of Made in Africa Evaluation

The contributions of AfrEA to the development of a robust African evaluation culture provided the opportunity for MAE to be viewed as an organised method. The decolonisation and Africanisation of evaluation in Africa is at the heart of MAE and African-rooted evaluation. The decolonisation project in evaluation is tied to the inherent power inequity in global evaluation. The decolonisation of this field requires more than the use of participatory evaluation or the use of 'indigenous evaluators or tools' (Henry & Pene 2001). Short of completely revolutionising international development, it may be difficult to claim that MAE is separate from international evaluation. Made in Africa evaluation has connection points with knowledge generated in African communities and Eurocentric evaluation practices (Uwizeyimana 2020). As a method, MAE is part of a larger field of African-based evaluation promoted by academics, activists and the community. African-rooted evaluation has been viewed as a viable approach to Africanising evaluation in Africa. Acknowledging the fact that African communities have agency and can utilise existing evaluation practices and develop new methods is paramount to the success of MAE as a recognised theory. Nevertheless, Eurocentric epistemology in scholarship, teaching

and learning makes it difficult for MAE to flourish across Africa (Keet 2014). Made in Africa evaluation must battle against epistemic injustice in knowledge production, Eurocentric epistemology in evaluation, unequal power relations and projects funded by donors who subscribe to an ideology that promotes quantity over quality. Figure 1 highlights the dynamics of each of these components and how they intersect and limit MAE as a method.

Figure 1: Four elements of decolonising African evaluation



Source: Author's own creation with design by Opuni Kwagyan Frimpong

Made in Africa evaluation as a method offers communities the ability to develop their own evaluative methods based on their culture, political and economic systems and history. The development of culturally and historically relevant evaluation strategies is at the heart of MAE. This allows for a diversity of views and practices that can be incorporated into a series of best practices for African evaluation. Scholars (Basheka & Byamugisha 2015; Chilisa 2015; Dassah & Uken 2006; Nalubega & Uwizeyimana 2019) have championed the calls for including MAE as a 'legitimate' evaluation method since its birth.

The world of African evaluation now has an appreciation for the need to include MAE as a method or at the least to embrace African-centred models as the go-to for evaluation practices. Embracing the diversity across African communities will create some challenges for developing an epistemology for African evaluation but also recognises the agency of local communities. The epistemology and ontology of MAE manifests at the individual, community and continental levels as they interact with existing Western evaluation epistemologies. The intersectionality of MAE as a method and in particular cases as a theory may provide African evaluators with a great toolkit of resources to evaluate projects, programmes, institutions, governments and communities.

THE WAY FORWARD: MADE IN AFRICA EVALUATION TO PAN-AFRICAN EVALUATION

This section seeks to contribute to the debates on the importance of MAE in African evaluation. It will also introduce a pan-African evaluation framework that is designed to be independent of global evaluation while maintaining a relationship with African evaluators. The crux of this section is to push the conversation and debates around MAE to the next level. It is not the aim of this article to provide solutions to these questions but to raise the following questions for further thought. What is the primary purpose of MAE in Africa? Is MAE seeking to replace the Western canon or find a place in the evaluation space alongside

the Western canon? How can MAE be used to evaluate internal social, economic and political issues across the continent?

The Western evaluation canon dominates evaluation circles globally but particularly in Africa. This domination influences African evaluators who prescribe to MAE as a philosophy or practice to translate its relevance and promotion through the Western canon. Inevitably, this creates barriers for MAE as it struggles to evolve organically, and it develops in the shadow of Western evaluation theories and methods. The decolonisation of international evaluation education and practice is necessary for MAE to become a full-fledged theory and method (Chilisa et al. 2016). There have been several attempts to decolonise academia and evaluation over the last several decades. The most noted theories are critical and postcolonial theories, in which academics have attempted to decolonise knowledge production. Many of these theories directly confront epistemic injustice and oppression in all sectors of society. There is now a call to decolonise these theories in the Global South (Bhamhra 2021). While these theories have liberatory elements, there is a need for African- rooted theories and methods that directly confront the Western evaluation canon and, independent of academia in the Global North, to create theories that are developed out of the culture and lived experiences of African communities. Developing alternative and independent frameworks is at the centre of decolonisation in Africa.

The African Indigenous Conceptual Framework (AICF) is one such method considered a tool to examine and critique society, including but not limited to economic and political power (Banda & Banda 2018). African evaluation frameworks are an extension of AICF and have incorporated culture, principles and values in evaluations (Chilisa & Mertens 2021; Cloete 2016). As described by Chilisa et al. (2016:56), the African evaluation frameworks model is decolonial and can transform evaluation in Africa. This model identified the ‘revitalization, restoration, retribution and protection of Indigenous knowledge’ as vital to the evaluation process. It can enhance and strengthen the foundations of MAE at the level of associations, individuals and educational institutions. Institutionalising African evaluation frameworks in Africa will push the Western evaluation canon to engage seriously with MAE

as a theory and method. Despite the potential for this framework to position MAE as a viable method and theory, it operates within the larger Western evaluation canon. The development of an evaluation framework free of the Western canon that organically emerges from the community's experiences, culture and history is a necessity for African evaluation. This would require African evaluators to re-evaluate the role of evaluation in community building.

The development of a pan-African evaluation framework (PanEval) that is liberatory, decolonial and independently African is needed to transform evaluation from validating external development projects to being the driver for African driven development. PanEval differs from the African evaluation framework, as it seeks to contribute to the unification and liberation of Africa. Under this framework, evaluations locally, nationally and internationally serve as a mechanism to develop African systems, theories and methods. It is pertinent to define pan-Africanism as prescribed by this framework. A singular definition of pan- Africanism is not possible because of the scope of actors in the movement and its depth of interaction with individuals, communities and nations.

Conceptually, this framework is pulling from multiple definitions of pan-Africanism and defining it as a collective movement consisting of thought and practice aimed at resisting and recreating spaces of collective agency. It serves as a vehicle to restore agency to the masses, communities and nations through developing African community-centred knowledge. Its goal is to liberate and unify African people globally. Using this definition, PanEval proposes developing a framework free of the Eurocentric evaluation theories that can evaluate externally funded, locally funded and small and large projects, programmes and development challenges. It employs existing African evaluation methods that have grown a living culture. The Lagos Plan of Action and Arusha Declaration are two examples of pan-African plans that were developed because of extensive evaluation (Cloete 2016). Researching existing evaluation methods both in written form and through community historians and archives will expose evaluation practices rooted in the history and culture of communities. This framework positions

African people as subjects in their lives, community and continent and not as objects of global capitalism. This framework would have loose principles that guide societal transformation but could be picked up and used to evaluate communities of any size, geographic, economic, cultural or political conditions. The pan-African framework incorporates African cultural practices across borders and recognises the interdependent relationship between community-level culture and collective and diverse African culture. This framework seeks to advance the New African personality promoted by Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana (Biney 2011; Poe 2007). PanEVAL provides an opportunity to develop a collective ontology and epistemology of knowledge production in African evaluation. The power of evaluation would lead to developing a collective pan-African consciousness.

CONCLUSION

Evaluation in Africa is transforming as evaluators, communities and AfrEA are challenging the methods and theories imposed by the Western evaluation canon. Over the last 15 years, MAE has gained prominence among associations and evaluators operating in the field. Despite its importance in certain evaluation circles across the continent, MAE is not recognised internationally. This is primarily due to the dominance of the Western evaluation canon and the Eurocentric epistemology and ontology of evaluation globally. The exclusion of MAE from 'legitimate' evaluation methods and theories is because of the inherent epistemic injustice in global knowledge production. Epistemic injustice impacts the curriculum and features of evaluation education and the main tools used in evaluations. The decolonisation of evaluation practices globally is what will ultimately enable African evaluation frameworks to prosper and be elevated as key players in the field. This connection limits the effectiveness of MAE as a method and theory and further marginalises it as a viable solution for African evaluation.

Made in Africa evaluation as a method and theory is waging an uphill battle against epistemic injustice in knowledge production,

Eurocentric epistemology in evaluation, unequal power relations and projects funded by donors who subscribe to an ideology that promotes quantity over quality. These barriers make it difficult for MAE to be fully recognised in the Western evaluation canon and suggest that an alternative framework is needed to radically shift power. African evaluation frameworks as described by several scholars are a viable option for shifting power to communities particularly with international development projects. The way forward for MAE may be to develop parallel African evaluation theories - one would be used to evaluate externally funded projects and the other would be poised to support the development of Africa or pan-Africa, completely disconnected from the Western evaluation canon.

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Chapter 3

Developing an Africa-rooted Programme Evaluation Approach

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ABSTRACT

There is a growing concern across the globe that a one-size-fits-all programme evaluation approach according to the Western evaluation model is not always appropriate in culturally and developmentally different contexts. The history of evaluation in Africa is a case in point, but it is an open question to what extent this implies a totally new 'African' evaluation approach or 'paradigm' that can be regarded as substantially different from a so-called Western programme evaluation paradigm. Clarity is needed about what changes should be brought about for the prevailing Western model of programme evaluation to be more appropriate to Africa and how these differences should be dealt with.

The concept of a more appropriate Africa-rooted programme evaluation management model has now been explicitly placed on the evaluation agenda in Africa. Proposals for a coherent and dedicated implementation plan for the Bellagio Report proposals are summarised in this article. These proposals do not amount to a substitution of the prevailing model of evaluation, but rather to a customisation of the model for the African continent. A dedicated project management effort under the auspices of AfrEA and its member VOPE associations is necessary to do this. SAMEA can and should play a very strategic role in this regard.

INTRODUCTION

The global domination of Western approaches to programme evaluation is increasingly questioned in non-Western contexts. Many of the evaluation principles, assumptions and practices that have developed in highly developed countries are frequently found to be unsuitable in lesser developed, non-Western cultural contexts where totally different principles and practices prevail. A one-size-fits-all recipe for evaluation is therefore impractical. Although this might be accepted as a common sense judgement, the problem is that evaluation cultures, practices and institutions in non-Western contexts are still weak and can in many cases not compete effectively with the more established and entrenched evaluation systems in developed countries. Western evaluation approaches, norms, practices and evaluators therefore still dominate such non-Western contexts by default.

A conceptual breakthrough was made in the African Evaluation Association (AfrEA) with the adoption of the Bellagio Report promoting the development of an Africa-rooted evaluation approach. The implications of the Bellagio Report (2013) are summarised and assessed in this article, and strategies are identified for building appropriate capacity to fast-track the implementation of the report's recommendations and taking the report findings further in the light of new developments and trends since its publication. The article will build on the findings and conclusions of Cloete, Rabie and De Coning (2014) on this issue and motivates why the envisaged Africa-rooted evaluation approach cannot comprise a substitution of the current Western one, but must of necessity be a refined and adapted version of it.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF EVALUATION IN AFRICA

As happened in many other sectors, the practice of systematic programme evaluation was imported into Africa from North America and Western Europe where this emerging trans-discipline originated. It occurred as a result of important historical developments.

The first important general historical Western influence that impacted strongly on African evaluation was the colonial occupation of Africa by Western European powers during the late nineteenth century and the twentieth century, which brought the latest knowledge and practices especially from Britain and France to the African states colonised by those powers. These colonial influences did not end with the independence of most African states between the 1960s and 1980s, but expanded after independence in those states as a result of the continued economic and political reliance of those states for a variety of reasons on their former colonial rulers for development assistance and support. Political and economic independence were in many cases mostly on paper, rather than real substantive political independence. These continued colonial influences also included the systematic evaluation of development assistance programmes.

The second more specific external historical influence on evaluation in Africa is the fact that the current dominant global evaluation approaches, theories and practices largely originated in the United States of America (USA), Canada and Britain, and to a lesser extent on the rest of the Western European continent. This history is explained in a number of historical sources, and *inter alia* also summarised in Mouton, Rabie, De Coning & Cloete (2014: chapter 2). Influential evaluation scholars, especially in the USA, produced the first and later standardised text books on this emerging trans-discipline (Scriven, House, Stake, Weiss, Rossi & Freeman, Lipsey, Stufflebeam, Patton, Greene, Mertens, Fetterman, etc), and also educated and trained professional evaluation scholars and practitioners across the world, including from African countries.

The third important historical root of the current Western domination of evaluation approaches and practices in Africa is the still prevailing influence of international development assistance agencies like the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the World Bank (WB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the African Development Bank (AfDB) and other international as well as national development agencies like those of the European Union (EU), the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Department

for International Development (DFID) of the United Kingdom (UK) government, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Canadian International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the Swedish International Development Coordination Agency (SIDA), the German Federal Enterprise for International Cooperation (GIZ) and numerous others. These influences are based on the evaluation thought and practices developed and applied in the respective countries and agencies. Supplementing the primarily academic scholars, are highly influential evaluation practitioners in international agencies like Bamberger, Rist, Picciotto, Rugh, Segone and others who have come through the Western academic evaluation ranks summarised above, and developed professional evaluation practices and systems in international agencies like the WB, UNDP and UNICEF that were applied across the developing world. These mental models and practices are transferred to Africa via the requirements of development aid agreements which normally prescribe the involvement of existing approaches, practices and even evaluation practitioners and consultancies from the donor countries or agencies concerned.

The above factors are the main reasons for the current situation where evaluation thought and practices in Africa are still overwhelmingly Western-influenced. They are reinforced by other considerations like the fact that development assistance is not always readily available from non-Western sources, although the current involvement of China in Africa has opened up a new source of such assistance. Furthermore, as a result of the strong intellectual dominance of the above Western education practices, even in African countries themselves, it is only recently that more independent African voices articulating different routes to develop more explicit African approaches and practices in evaluation, have started to gain momentum.

Responses from Africa

The history of evaluation in Africa is incomplete if one does not recognise the role of African researchers, policy analysts and evaluators in resisting colonial rule and policies. They played a crucial role in

providing alternative views and evaluative opinions about the impact of Western powers on African developmental efforts, especially concerning the history of the evaluation of 'structural adjustment' policies and experiences.

An important development for evaluation in Africa was the adoption of the *Lagos Plan of Action* at the first Extraordinary Economic Summit in Lagos, Nigeria in April 1980. The Lagos Plan of Action was a reaction to structural adjustment programmes imposed on African countries from the early eighties onward. The main argument was that Africa and the different regions in Africa should develop their own policy capacities in parallel to the African Capacity Building Initiative (ACBI) of the WB and the UNDP (see *inter alia* ACBF 1992; World Bank 1991 and Oosthuizen 1996). Another alternative policy capacity development agency established at the time, the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), stated that: "...*(i)ndigenisation is not the notion of African leaders to create their own idiosyncratic 'indigenous' ideologies and then to insist that research efforts be harnessed to give respectability and coherence*" (CODESRIA 1993:19).

These developments included an increasing focus on the need for more resources for local researchers to do independent policy evaluation and research. Also, the injunction, 'know thyself' which gives primacy to knowledge of Africa, was regarded as an important consideration. This could indeed be regarded as the early roots of self-assessment and peer review that later translated into the *African Peer Review Mechanism* (APRM) as a form of African-driven evaluation.

THE START OF SYSTEMATIC EVALUATION IN AFRICA

The development of systematic evaluation in Africa started late as a result of mostly the same factors identified above. A network of evaluation practitioners was created by UNICEF in Nairobi, Kenya in 1977 to enhance capacity-building for UNICEF and other evaluations in East Africa. This initiative therefore attempted to create indigenous African

evaluation capacity. The first of these developments took place in countries like the Comores, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda and Zimbabwe. In almost every case, the first meeting was initiated by UNICEF (Spring and Patel 2000).

In March 1987, an OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) seminar brought together donors and beneficiaries of development programmes to discuss objectives, means and experiences in evaluation. The outcome was an awareness of the need to strengthen evaluation capacities of developing countries. The OECD published the summary of the discussions in 1988 in its report titled *Evaluation in Developing Countries: A Step towards Dialogue*. This initiative called for a series of seminars to be held at regional level (ie Africa, Asia, Latin America), to intensify dialogue, discuss problems unique to each region, and recommend concrete and specific actions with a view to strengthening the evaluation capacities of developing countries.

Other prominent facilitators for evaluation capacity-building on the African continent during these early years, has been the AfDB and WB Operations Evaluation Departments. Two initial conferences hosted respectively by these two multilaterals in 1998 and 2000 raised further awareness around evaluation capacity development in Africa. It is important to note that even until 2012, the early initiatives to develop a more independent African evaluation character, therefore also originated from international multilateral agencies and not really from Africa itself.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF EVALUATION AS A PROFESSION IN AFRICA

Until the 1980s, evaluation on the continent was largely driven by international actors - aid agencies, large non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and evaluators. It also manifested in the work of African community activists, political analysts, and later through policy analysis, research and policy evaluation. Since there was little indigenous evaluation capacity at the time as it had little prominence as a field of work

or profession, subject specialists fulfilled this role (Ofir 2014). During the 1980s and the early 1990s, a diverse group of emerging evaluators in government, NGOs and the private sector (mainly from consulting firms), showed a steady increase in number in response to increasing evaluations by international donors and multi-lateral institutions. Since the early 2000s the momentum built up after the AfrEA conference in 1999 and the increasing formation of evaluation networks increased the profile of evaluation as a profession on the continent. According to Prof Zenda Ofir, a former President of AfrEA and also the main driving force behind the establishment of the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association (SAMEA), the inaugural AfrEA conference in 1999 represented a watershed moment for evaluation in Africa when more than 300 representatives from 35 countries converged in Nairobi to establish a continental association as platform for interaction between all Africans interested in evaluation. This conference was the genesis of AfrEA, whose activities over the past 15 years are seen by many as having been pivotal in the emergence of evaluation as a profession in Africa (Ofir 2014. See also Segone and Ocampo 2006 and Traore and Wally 2000).

In the late 1990s, increasing concern started to consolidate among African participants in these processes about the nature and impacts of the structural adjustment programmes of the WB and the IMF, as well as about the Western-dominated evaluation paradigms underlying the evaluations undertaken by non-African agencies and individuals in Africa. In a bibliographic review of evaluations undertaken in Africa, *"...the majority were found to have been requested by donors and international agencies. The majority of the first authors are not African. Of the original 133 articles that were reviewed, for example, three-quarters had a first author with a Western name, 15% were clearly African, and it was not clear in 12% of the cases. African author participation was acknowledged as second or third author in 12% of the total. There is some room for confusion as many of the authors and reviewers are African, but with names of European or Asian origin. While the authors are mostly non-African, the reviewers, however, are nearly all African, by conscious design of the authors"* (Spring and Patel 2000).

In September 1999, AfrEA was established at a ground-breaking inaugural pan- African conference of evaluators held in Nairobi, Kenya, with 300 participants from 26 African countries. It was largely the result of efforts by Mahesh Patel, the Kenyan and other African country evaluation societies, financially supported by UNICEF. The theme of this conference was Building Evaluation Capacity in Africa. The main aims were to

- Share information and build evaluation capacity,
- promote the formation of national evaluation associations,
- promote the knowledge and use of an African adaptation of the Programme Evaluation Standards,
- form an Africa-wide association, promoting evaluation both as a discipline and profession, and
- create and disseminate a database of evaluators.

The organisation constituted an important capacity-building and networking opportunity for everyone interested in systematic M&E practices on the African continent. It was the first attempt with an open invitation across sectors, institutions, including all countries and numerous policy-makers. Six AfrEA conferences have been convened to date. They have been held purposefully in different regions of the continent in order to stimulate interest in those regions.

The establishment of AfrEA was the consequence of the vision and energy of Mahesh Patel, then from UNICEF. It quickly flourished during these first few challenging years of its existence. *“We owe a debt of gratitude to Mahesh in particular, and the pioneers who supported him during that period. It is also important to note that AfrEA brought in many international experts for training, supported national evaluation association growth, established an Africa-wide community both virtually through a listserv and conferences. AfrEA also gave African evaluators a formal voice on international platforms where evaluation was being shaped among others in organisations such as the International Organisation for Cooperation in Evaluation (IOCE), the High Level Meetings on Development Effectiveness, in arguing for a broader set of designs for impact evaluation during the formative stages of the*

Network of Networks on Impact Evaluation (NONIE) and the International Institute of Impact Evaluation (3ie), etc" (Ofir 2014).

A South African evaluation community also emerged during this time, directly as a result of the establishment of AfrEA. Although there were some evaluation specialists in South Africa, few regarded it as a full-time occupation except in a few specialised units such as at the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) where a dedicated M&E unit was established in 1996, while the first M&E unit in the South African government was established in the Department of Land Affairs. After attending the first AfrEA conference, Ofir established Evalnet, one of the first consulting companies in South Africa that explicitly specialised only in evaluation. In 2002 she invited Michael Quinn Patton to South Africa. At one of his courses a decision was taken to establish the South African Evaluation Network (SAENet), also led by Ofir as an informal network with members connected via listserv. At the second AfrEA conference in Nairobi in 2002 she was nominated as the second AfrEA President, and as a result co-coordinated in 2004 with Dr Indran Naidoo, then Chief Director responsible for evaluation in the Public Service Commission (PSC), the third AfrEA conference in Cape Town. At this conference a process was also initiated to formalise SAENet as the South African M&E Association, SAMEA.

Ofir (2014) describes the evolution of evaluation into a profession in Africa as "*a wave that gathered momentum during the 1990s and the 2000s*", but that still needs concerted, strategic efforts to develop it further if it is to fulfil its promise as a profession that can and should help accelerate the development of the continent. Its past and future growth should be considered against the background of the "*colonialisation of evaluation*", where for decades foreign teams flew into the continent to evaluate African performance against measures and through processes often not understood or owned in Africa. Although much has been, and is still being learnt from international agencies and from the many committed international evaluators who have had African interests at heart, the practice and profession in Africa are now increasingly being shaped by local evaluators, and African evaluators are present in increasing numbers at international conferences. However, their work

still tends to be less visible than desired, in part because only limited research on evaluation is being done at academic centres and by evaluators across the continent. Ofir (2014) emphasises that “...more innovative, and especially, visible scholarship and thought leadership in theory and practice from Africa is needed to push the frontiers of evaluation in support of our own as well as global development”.

CURRENT STATUS OF EVALUATION IN AFRICA

Over the past 15 years the practice and profession of evaluation developed and expanded exponentially on the continent and elsewhere in the developing world. In 1999 there were only six national African evaluation associations. By 2002 this number had grown to 14, stimulated and supported by the new continent-wide community of evaluators. At the end of 2013 there were 143 verified evaluation associations and networks worldwide, of which 26 were in Africa (*now called Voluntary Organisations of Professional Evaluators (VOPEs)*). See IOCE 2016). This period also saw a significant increase in the interest of national governments in establishing M&E systems.

However, evaluations in Africa are still largely commissioned by non-African stakeholders who mostly comprise international donor or development agencies that run or fund development programmes on the continent. This is still a sensitive issue for many African evaluators, because perceptions have emerged in circles both in Africa and outside the continent that African evaluators have to improve their international competitiveness compared to their northern hemisphere counterparts because the profession in Africa is relatively new and there is much room for improvement. There is a major problem with the visibility of the profiles of African evaluators since there is not enough time to write about it for public consumption, or resources for large numbers of evaluators to travel to international conferences and other international events. Also there are just not enough evaluation scholars. However, this situation is changing fast and African evaluators are becoming increasingly internationally competitive. This is now

inter alia facilitated by the publication of AfrEA's new mouthpiece, the African Evaluation Journal (AEJ 2016).

AFRICA-ROOTED EVALUATION

As has become clear in the above summary so far, the main arguments in favour of a more Africa-rooted evaluation paradigm centre around the fact that the most visible evaluation approaches, models, theories, practices, specialists, scholars and practitioners that are currently operating in Africa are of Western origin (maybe with the notable exception of Huey Chen). The most influential argument is that the current Western evaluation paradigm is not always optimal in Africa and needs to be contextualised to be more suitable to African conditions, cultures and institutions. In this process the prevailing African ontologies, epistemologies and methodologies have to be infused in a more holistic transdisciplinary manner into the application of systematic programme evaluation on the continent (Chilisa and Malunga 2012 and Bellagio Report 2013).

Chilisa and Malunga state that there is a need for two main African transformations of current Western evaluation culture and practices in the Evaluation Tree (Alkin 2013). The first is *"...decolonizing and indigenizing evaluation ... to recognize the adaptation of the accumulated Western theory and practice on evaluation to serve the needs of Africans"* while the second is the development of a *"...relational evaluation branch"* (that) *... draws from the concept of 'wellness' as personified in African greetings and the southern African concept of 'I am because we are'. The wellness reflected in the relationship between people extends also to non-living things, emphasizing that evaluation from an African perspective should include a holistic approach that links an intervention to the sustainability of the ecosystem and environment around it"*. For evaluation to be 'rooted' in Africa it should for example include an analysis of the intervention's contribution towards community wellness, and balance both Western and African priorities and indicators. The question is what this change would entail?

The Bellagio Report 2013

The most authoritative assessment of the need for a specific Africa-rooted approach to evaluation was summarised in the 2013 Bellagio Report. The Report on the *African Thought Leaders Forum on Evaluation and Development: Expanding Leadership in Africa* provides a very well-articulated view of the concept of evaluation that is driven by, and rooted in Africa. This meeting was the result of a special initiative taken at the 2007 AfrEA conference in Niamey, Niger, where a day-long special session with support from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) led to a formal statement encouraging Africa to ‘*Make Evaluation our Own*’ (AfrEA Special Stream Statement 2007), later transformed by AfrEA into a ‘*Made in Africa*’ strategy for evaluation. The stream was designed to bring African and other international experiences in evaluation and in development evaluation to help stimulate the debate on M&E. The Anglophile Africa Regional Center for Learning on Evaluation and Results (CLEAR-AA) facilitated a series of discussions in the Bellagio Centre in Italy, and subsequently published the Bellagio Report (2013)¹.

The following key issues were identified in 2007 as a guiding framework for further discussion:

- *“evaluation practice in Africa is based on external values and contexts, is donor driven and the accountability mechanisms tend to be directed towards recipients of aid rather than both recipients and the providers of aid”*

1 The Bellagio meeting was held on 14 – 17 November 2012. The participants were Prof Doha Abdel Hamid – Egypt, Dr Isaac Bekalo - (Moderator) Ethiopia, Prof Bagele Chilisa – Botswana, Dr Josiah Cobbah – Ghana, Prof Laila El Baradei – Egypt, Dr Sulley Gariba – Ghana, Irene Karanja – Kenya, Hajia Alima Mahama – Ghana, Dr Chiku Malunga – Malawi, Prof Robin Moore - South Africa, Dr Roa Muraguri-Mwololo – Kenya, Dr Zenda Ofir - South Africa, Mr Stephen Porter (CLEAR-AA) – Britain, Dr Sukai Prom-Jackson - The Gambia, Prof Akilagpa Sawyer – Ghana, Debbie Serwadda – Uganda, Nermine Wally – Egypt, Prof Alaphia Wright - Sierra Leone, Kieron Crawley (CLEAR – AA Forum Project Manager) – Ireland.

- ...evaluation...needs to address...country ownership; the macro-micro disconnect; attribution; ethics and values; and power-relations;
- Need to re-examine our own preconceived assumptions; underpinning values, paradigms (e.g. transformative vs pragmatic); what is acknowledged as being evidence; and by whom, before we can select any particular methodology/approach" (AfrEA Special Stream Statement 2007).

The purpose of the Bellagio meeting was to "...encourage fresh thinking for Made in Africa Approach to Evaluation by AfrEA"... "Thought leadership in evaluation in Africa is rare or largely invisible in shaping innovative national, regional or global evaluation thinking and practices in Africa " (Bellagio Report 2013:5).

The Report encourages evaluators to explore what "*Africa driven and Africa rooted evaluation*" means to them. It has been suggested that the African evaluation community should in the next phase of its evolution focus on developing substantiated theories and practices that illuminate the question '*if evaluation had originated in Africa, what would it be like?*' (Ofir 2014). It is also clear that a need exists to further explore what '*indigenous evaluation*' means, and its origins, as is already being done elsewhere in the world.

The Bellagio Report (2013) noted that the lack or low profile of 'thought leadership' in evaluation in Africa has to be addressed: "*Considering development contexts, frameworks and trends, and their implications for the evaluation profession provides a starting point for such thought leadership. Influential evaluation findings lead to new development approaches. As development strategies evolve, so do evaluation approaches. The African evaluation profession therefore occasionally needs to take stock of how the development context is influencing – or should influence – the direction of their theory and practice ... Participants discussed the development-evaluation interface and its implications for evaluation in Africa over the next decade, engaging with:*

- *The unfolding context for development and evaluation;*
- *The core belief in the value of Africa rooted evaluation for development;*

- *First steps towards a framework for Africa rooted evaluation;*
- *The notion of ‘Africa driven’ evaluation for development; and*
- *Potential strategies for action, change and influence”.*

The view expressed by the group who met in Bellagio is that this debate is not yet prominent or visible enough in the intellectual sphere in Africa. Chilisa and Malunga (2012) undertook a seminal exercise in preparation for the 2012 Bellagio meeting to identify, explain and contextualise different indigenous evaluation attributes that could be considered in future for African-rooted evaluations. These ideas are explained in the Bellagio Report which considered inter alia the historical significance of evaluation, ie its historical roots in Africa, the spiritual identity of Africans and how it relates to evaluation, the importance of empowerment approaches to evaluation, group participation and thinking in evaluation as well as African decision-making processes and methodologies, such as decision-making by consensus. It is for these reasons that participative evaluation, also through self-assessment and peer review, has become such an important approach in acknowledging the inherent value that lies in African evaluation.

In their working paper for the Bellagio meeting, Chilisa and Malunga (2012:551) emphasised that *“an African lives in and for the community. The individual cannot exist without the community and the community cannot exist without the individual. The conscious interdependence between the individual and the community is what characterizes that which is essentially African. This model is built on the concept of Ubuntu ...which, in simple terms, means community, and the essence of being human”*. They also identified the following five interrelated principles of ubuntu that African societies according to them use as basis for their assessments of community/societal progress: Sharing and collective ownership of opportunities, responsibilities and challenges, the importance of people and relationships over things, participatory decision-making and leadership, reconciliation as the goal for conflict management and resolution, and loyalty.

The executive summary of the Bellagio Report summarised the thought leadership required to establish a more explicit recognition of

the African context within which evaluations in Africa take place and a more explicit Africanisation of evaluation designs and methodologies as follows:

- i. *“understanding the role of changing and complex contexts in evaluation, and using systems thinking for holistic solutions,*
- ii. *the role of norms and values in development and in evaluation,*
- iii. *the need for Africa rooted and Africa led evaluation,*
- iv. *policy coherence from national to global levels, to be analyzed in tandem with the micro-macro disconnect,*
- v. *mutual accountability in development financing programs and in development interventions,*
- vi. *evaluation beyond an obsession with “impact”, to include a stronger focus on “managing for impact” (which includes ongoing monitoring for impact, learning and adaptive management); concepts such as vulnerability, sustainability and resilience; and a nuanced interpretation of “value for money”,*
- vii. *engaging with sensitive issues such as macro political trends, the often mindless rhetoric around concepts such as democracy and human rights, and the ongoing obscuring of truth in ‘evidence’, and their role in the effectiveness of development strategies,*
- viii. *searching for unintended consequences and unexpected impacts,*
- ix. *synthesis that produces useful knowledge, and*
- x. *evaluation in (self-determined) priority content areas” (2013:10).*

The Bellagio meeting resolved to pursue the following strategies to move towards an Africa-rooted evaluation culture (Bellagio Report 2013:14. See also Ofir 2013):

- *“Catalyzing ‘thought leadership’ on evaluation in Africa through credible, independent, not-for-profit actors, dynamic, continuous dialogues within a liberal thinking space, key frameworks, policies, strategies & aid relevant for Africa, belief- and value-laden nature of dev & eval theory and practice rooted in Africa, inform institution-alized, sustainable, effective innovative eval systems in government.*

- *There should also be a transparent, public repository of knowledge on African evaluation assisted by specialist universities, think tanks and evaluation projects...*"

At the 2014 Conference of AfrEA in Yaounde in Cameroon, the AEJ, which has been in the pipeline for a number of years, was launched while a formal mapping of key evaluation individuals, organisations, networks/coalitions and initiatives in Africa is in progress with the purpose to engage them in different ways to develop a broad-based consensus about the next steps to implement the Bellagio resolutions. These steps include follow-up forums to work out the details of implementation, to establish "*a network / community of practice of African evaluation "thought leaders" (on theory and practice) who are prepared to advance work on key concepts related to Africa-rooted and Africa-led evaluation*", as well as a resource repository for this purpose (The Bellagio Report 2013:14).

It is clear that the Bellagio meeting has already made a considerable effort in attempting to identify ways to improve the application of current evaluation knowledge and practices more effectively in the African context. The report, however, just identifies a number of issues that should be addressed and changed for the African context. However, what exactly should be done, why, how, by whom, when and with what resources, are not yet clear. This refinement and expansion of the Bellagio Report is necessary for implementation purposes. The most cost-effective way to proceed from here is probably for AfrEA to establish a formal Project Steering Group to develop a business plan with clear project management goals, resources, time frames and outcomes that can in a more concrete and measurable manner identify the different evaluation activities that need to be changed in order to develop over time a distinct African evaluation identity. I would like to suggest that the following conceptual framework could be useful in this regard:

WHAT IS THE WESTERN EVALUATION APPROACH AND WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

The main questions that need to be concretely answered probably include *inter alia* the following:

1. Is it possible to identify Western, African, Asian and for that matter Latin-Caribbean evaluation approaches that differ fundamentally?
2. What, if anything, should change in the prevailing Western evaluation culture and practices for and in the African context?
3. How could an Africa-rooted evaluation approach improve current evaluation approach shortcomings for Africa, and
4. How should such a transition to a more Africa-rooted evaluation system be approached?

At the moment there are no clear-cut answers to these questions. I suggest that one would be able to consider the answers to these questions in better perspective by distinguishing systematically the possible differences between a Western and a more appropriate African approach that have been identified so far above, as well as possible additional differences, in the following specific evaluation activities²:

The envisaged AfrEA Steering Group on the Development of an Africa-rooted Evaluation Model should also have sub-groups to monitor the implementation of each of the above evaluation activities further, and to develop its own explicit theory of change to comply with good evaluation practice. Unpacked in this way, it seems as if an 'Africa-rooted' evaluation paradigm would not contain substantive differences from the prevailing 'Western' evaluation paradigm, but its purpose, focus, design and implementation would probably just be

2 These issues have emanated from the Bellagio discussions so far as well as from other investigations into culturally sensitive evaluations. I frame them in the form of open-ended questions to be answered or issues to be clarified rather than definitively different issues that are identified. Kwakami, Aton, Cram, Lai & Porima (2008) and AIHEC (2012) also suggest frameworks for 'culturally competent' evaluations that comprise similar elements.

more sensitive to African cultural contexts and practices in order to achieve the most accurate and valid results.

This is also the case with evaluation design and implementation in other cultural contexts (eg in the context of Native Americans, New Zealand Maoris, Australian Aborigines, South African Khoi-San, Brazilian, Indian and other indigenous cultural tribes and groups) (see AIHEC 2015). There is a very active thought leadership stream in the American Evaluation Association (AEA) that focuses on what they call ‘Culturally Competent Evaluation’ (LaFrance and Nichols 2010; Rog, Fitzpatrick and Conner 2012 and Gervin 2012).

Table 1:

Evaluation Stage	Evaluation activity	Evaluation Activity Description	Western approach	African approach
Planning and Design	Evaluation Values and Assumptions	What are the main values and assumptions underlying the evaluation?	Donor and Government Accountability? Efficiency? Effectiveness? Responsiveness? Ethics? Reductionism? Pragmatism?	Pleasing ancestors? Dignity? Self-esteem? Respect? Wellness? Loyalty? Ubuntu? Solidarity Relationships? Holism? Equity? Ethics? Participation? Fairness? Reflexivity? Empowerment? Development? Vulnerability? Sustainability?

(Continued)

Table 1: *(Continued)*

Evaluation Stage	Evaluation activity	Evaluation Activity Description	Western approach	African approach
	Evaluation Purpose and Focus	What is the purpose of the evaluation? What is the evaluation focus? Why is this focus selected? How is this focus selected? Is the focus of the evaluation appropriate? Evaluation Management standards? Nature of evidence?	Externally-driven evaluations Improvement in life quality / happiness? Impact?	Internally-driven evaluations Transformation in life quality / happiness? Basic services & facilities? AfrEA Evaluation Guidelines?
	Evaluation Design	What is the most appropriate evaluation design?	Bias towards Statistical Counterfactual? RCTs?	Bias towards Rigorous Qualitative Design? Power relationships?
Implementation and Use	Data Collection	What are the most appropriate evaluation data collection and monitoring strategies?	Rigorous statistical sampling?	Culturally sensitive participatory processes? Indigenous knowledge?
	Data Analysis	What are the most appropriate data analysis Indicators and strategies?	Rigorous quantitative and qualitative analyses? Causal Attribution? Generic indicators?	Rigorous Qualitative analyses? Programme Contribution? SDG Indicators?

Table 1: (Continued)

Evaluation Stage	Evaluation activity	Evaluation Activity Description	Western approach	African approach
	Data Presentation and Communication	What are the most appropriate data presentation and communication strategies?	Written and oral? Existing mass media?	Oral & visual emphasis? Different communication channels?
	Evaluation Use	What are the most appropriate ways in which evaluation findings and lessons can be used?	Education? Improvement? Accountability?	Education? Improvement? Accountability? Empowerment?
	Evaluation Policy and Regulatory Frameworks	What are the most appropriate evaluation policy and regulatory frameworks?	One-size-fits all? Legislation?	Experimentation? Context-sensitive customisation?
	Evaluation Capacity-building	What are the most appropriate education and training approaches?	Generic M&E training?	Context-sensitive content and facilitation?

ROLE OF SAMEA

Before the establishment of SAMEA, South African evaluation scholars and practitioners were prominent in the development and consolidation of evaluation not only in South Africa but also in other African countries. Since the establishment of SAMEA, its members have continued to play active roles in this regard and also in the establishment and consolidation of AfrEA itself. SAMEA is at the moment one of the most active institutional VOPE members of AfrEA. SAMEA has the full support of the South African government in the form of the

Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) in the Presidency as well as of the PSC which has the mandate of evaluating the implementation by the government of the values in the South African Constitution.

SAMEA is therefore strategically situated to play an important leading role in the development of an Africa-rooted evaluation culture and practice on this continent. I trust that the SAMEA Board of Directors will seriously consider prioritising this project among their other activities. I also trust that individual members of SAMEA will actively promote the development and consolidation of an Africa-rooted evaluation culture in their respective activities. SAMEA and its individual members can and should also become regionally and globally more active and visible as thought leaders to identify and promote more innovative thinking and practices in evaluation in Africa.

CONCLUSIONS

The global consolidation of systematic evaluation as a distinct profession with its own distinct applied paradigms, theories and methodologies was very strongly influenced if not to a large extent dominated by developments, approaches, methodologies and practices in the USA, the UK and other Western countries. The establishment of systematic policy, programme and project evaluation in other parts of the globe only started relatively recently (virtually only since the beginning of the 1990s). Only recently have increasing voices been raised in non-Western contexts in favour of the development of culturally distinct approaches and practices that are more congruent with the local value systems in those regions.

There is a growing concern across the globe that a one-size-fits-all evaluation approach according to the Western evaluation model is not always appropriate in culturally and developmentally different contexts. The history of evaluation in Africa is a case in point. However, one must ask the question to what extent this implies a totally new evaluation approach or 'paradigm' that can be regarded as different from

a so-called Western evaluation paradigm or for that matter an Asian or Maori evaluation paradigm. It is generally accepted that ‘context matters’ (which was the theme of the 2013 AEA Conference in Washington DC), and that the so-called Western evaluation paradigm recognises different cultural differences that need to be taken into account in different evaluation activities. It is still an open question, though, what changes should be brought about for the prevailing Western model of evaluation to be more appropriate to Africa and how these differences should be dealt with. The table suggested above might present a useful way of looking at the most salient issues in this regard.

The concept of a more appropriate Africa-rooted evaluation management model has been placed on the evaluation agenda in Africa. An influential response to this debate is contained in the Bellagio Report and other statements. This report is the most concrete input so far in this debate, but it needs to be concretised better in order to be implemented successfully. The proposals for a coherent and dedicated implementation plan for the Bellagio Report that have been summarised in this article, can fast-track the refinement of the prevailing Western model of evaluation in a different African context, and create more appropriate capacity for evaluation in Africa. It does not amount to a substitution of the prevailing model of evaluation, but rather amounts to a customisation of the model for the African continent. In this customisation process, it is crucial that African evaluators, both scholars and practitioners, obtain clarity about exactly what needs to change in the current evaluation model, and how to do it. For this purpose, a dedicated project management effort under the auspices of AfrEA and its member VOPE associations is necessary.

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Section B

Theory, Approaches and Methods of MAE

Chapter 4

Reshaping How We Think About Evaluation: A Made in Africa Evaluation Perspective

Steven Masvaure and Sonny M. Motlanthe

ABSTRACT

Background: The African development space is dominated by the Western hegemony that shapes the structural funding model, knowledge transfer and aid. Western hegemony defines the Western countries or development funders as superior to the aid receivers, without necessarily acknowledging the role of colonial history and racism that defined and influenced the underdevelopment of African countries. In the African context, the Global North uses liberalism as a tool to maintain hegemony; hence, there is no need to use colonial coercion as liberalism is self-reinforcing, self-legitimising and self-perpetuating. It absorbs counter-hegemony via its international institutions, economic interdependence and democracy

Objectives: This article examines how evaluation as a tool has perpetuated Western hegemony on the epistemological, axiological and ontological understanding of development in sub-Saharan Africa

Methods: The approach adopted in this article involved a traditional review of literature, analysis of tacit knowledge and personal experiences on evaluation practice in Africa

Results: Firstly, the article demonstrates that the theories and practice behind international development are based on colonial thinking and subjugation that permeate themselves throughout the conceptualisation, design and implementation and how results of development interventions are evaluated and viewed. Secondly, the article provides practical steps on how to decolonise international development and evaluations in Africa. The findings also show that evaluations should not be treated separately from the dominant forces that define international development. The evaluation field is a microcosm and an appendage of Western hegemonic influence on international development

Conclusion: The article concludes by advocating for the need to change the approach to international development and evaluation practice and emphasising the centrality of the worldviews and values of targeted populations by development interventions

Keywords: decolonisation; hegemony; made in Africa Evaluation; international development; coloniality of power; white gaze.

INTRODUCTION

Made in Africa Evaluation has emerged as an alternative approach to evaluation that brings a better understanding of the development interventions that are being implemented in Africa. Made in Africa Evaluation calls for M&E professionals to become visionaries - to envisage and present a decolonial perspective of the development trajectories for Africa, to deconstruct the inherited structures of domination, and to deal with the many paradoxes and contradictions that will inform African-rooted evaluation theories and practices (Abrahams et al 2022). The effectiveness of development programmes in sub-Saharan Africa has been elusive to the

extent that there are minimal inroads in addressing key challenges such as poverty, inequality and currently climate change effects. The international development community has viewed sub-Saharan Africa as a bottomless pit because of poor development effectiveness and increasing development challenges. The bottomless pit adage has led to the increasing demand for those implementing development programmes to account for and justify the resources through monitoring and evaluating their programmes, thereby designating evaluation systems as an important tool for accountability and deciding the worthiness or value of the development programmes. This article examines how evaluation as a tool has perpetuated Western hegemony on the epistemological, axiological and ontological understanding of development. An evaluation makes a judgement of the worthiness or value of development interventions. In addition, these judgements on development interventions are used to influence priority funding areas, programme designs and implementation. However, in this article, the argument is that in the African context, the effectiveness of evaluations is reduced by underlying issues and challenges (which will be elaborated on in subsequent sections of this article). The underlying issues are related to who funds, designs, implements, commissions and conducts an evaluation. Chilisa et al. (2015) reiterated that evaluation is the worst instrument of epistemological imperialism in Africa, as it adopts Western epistemological approaches to social inquiry that reinforce a donor-driven, accountability-based approach to measure evaluation outcomes.

We argue that the development space in sub-Saharan Africa is dominated by foreign money and aid. Furthermore, the design, implementation and commissioning viewpoint of evaluations in the African context conveys the values and viewpoint of the commissioners and the funders, who mostly come from the Global North. In addition, the commissioners and programme funders provide opportunities to Global North evaluators, who are regarded as having 'superior evaluation skills' and display similar viewpoints and values (Ngwabi & Wildschut, 2019). Therefore, the prevailing worldview in evaluations is from the Global North and is guided by epistemological assumptions that are derived from the Global North and are imposed on sub-Saharan Africa.

This article seeks to reshape the thinking about evaluation in the African context using a Made in Africa perspective. The focus of the article is not only on evaluation but also on the broad sub-Saharan African development discourse. This article is underpinned by the fact that the lion's share of development funding in sub-Saharan Africa has its origin from the Global North, which shapes international development by influencing how development programmes are designed, implemented and evaluated. The influence of the Global North is also felt in the African evaluation space, which is a microcosm of the African development space and is dominated by Western funding, development ideals, methods of social inquiry and initiatives. The monitoring and evaluation (M&E) space and the evaluation practice also reflect the dominance of Western funders, evaluation commissioners, evaluation theories and approaches (Chilisa et al. 2015). The dominance does not only end in providing funding but also spills into development programme implementation and evaluation. The Global South finds itself making a minimal contribution to the international development discourse. In this article, the argument is that transforming evaluation alone without transforming the broad international development approaches will not be effective in decolonising evaluations.

RESEARCH METHODS

As authors, we are cognisant of the limited literature that focuses on decolonising evaluation or Made in Africa evaluation; hence, the approach adopted in this article involved a traditional review of literature, analysis of tacit knowledge and personal experiences. We accumulated tacit knowledge through professional evaluation experience, discussions with fellow evaluators and our work in evaluation capacity development in anglophone Africa. The analysis involved synthesising key sources of evidence on international development, decolonisation and evaluation. After the synthesis, arguments were presented and supported by evidence.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The section starts by giving a history of colonisation and its influence on international development. It also gives insights into how colonisation shaped the current context and thinking in international development. Issues such as coloniality of power, white gaze on development and the role of international development organisations as proxies of the Western ideals are discussed. In the later sections, the article discusses the implication of these issues on evaluation practice in the African context. The article also offers Made in Africa evaluation approaches as a solution to the Western hegemony on evaluation and international development.

History of colonialism and its influence on international development and evaluation

Africa is a continent that has a history of colonialism, which marginalised Africans politically and economically. Colonialism aims to exploit the physical, human and economic resources of an area to benefit the colonising nation (Settles 1996). The viability of colonialism was only realised after the imperial forces secured control of the land and other resources through various means, including armed invasion, ruthless dispossession of indigenous communities, signing of dubious or fraudulent treaties with the African ruling elites and the negotiation of loose mining concessions (Chitonge 2018:22). The treaties led to Africans being dispossessed of their land and their rights to various resources were limited. The land was and is still of intrinsic cultural value to the African communities, and their livelihoods were all centred on land. During the colonial period, the black population was dispossessed of their fertile and wet agricultural land, and they were placed in areas that were known for their low rainfall, adverse temperatures and vulnerability to natural disasters, whilst the white settlers settled in areas that were favourable for agricultural purposes and not prone to natural disasters.

In essence, the core objective of colonialism was not necessarily political dominance but to use the colonies as a source of human, physical and economic resources to support the industrialisation of the Western countries (Simon 1989). The colonial system built economic systems that were commodity-based, emphasising cash crop production and building trading networks that linked the economic outputs of the colonised to the colonisers (Chitonge 2018). The emphasis was on the development of primary industries that were labour intensive and supplied resources to Western industries. To sustain the system, the colonial powers had to use coercive approaches that subjugated and quashed any rebellion by the indigenous population, so that they would continue to provide cheap labour to the mines, farms and other raw material extraction industries (Heleta 2016). Africa's history was altered forever, affecting African modes of thought, patterns of cultural development and ways of life, which were permanently impacted by the change in political structure brought about by colonialism (Bowden, Chiripanhura & Mosley 2008). The colonial economic system created the socio-economic challenges that the international development community is seeking to address.

By the end of the colonial period, the trade linkages between sub-Saharan and Western countries were more developed and complex. This made detangling and disengaging difficult; hence, currently these interlinkages are still present and supported by the Western political hegemony that controls the economic and political developments in the continent (Viriri & Mungwini 2010). In the postcolonial era, the expectation was that there was going to be a transfer of the control of the resources such as land, mineral claims, etc. to the indigenous people. However, this did not happen because of several reasons that include 'coercion' (consented to through liberalism, international institutions and international trade) by the Western countries who advocated for the non-destabilisation of functional economies. In return, the sub-Saharan countries were given development aid, and negotiations for the end of colonialism emphasised political independence at the expense of economic and resource control. There was a failure by the new political elite to realise that at the end of colonialism,

sub-Saharan African countries gained some sort of political independence and left the colonial economic system intact. This was emphasised by Alemazung (2010):

When colonialism finally ended, the big Western powers could not afford to keep their hands completely off their colonies, thus, they continued to influence politics and developments in these regions where their political and economic relationship was based on their colonial ties on multilateral relations and engagements. (p. 64)

This created an exploitative and asymmetric relationship between the West and sub-Saharan countries.

In addition to the exploitative and asymmetric relationship, the previously displaced indigenous communities never got their land back; however, they remained on unproductive land that is vulnerable to the vagaries of climate change and other socio-economic development challenges. The various development theories that were crafted emphasised that effective development was only supposed to be achieved through economic growth, the creation of an enabling environment for the creation of employment by private companies and globalisation and urbanisation instead of ceding productive land, mineral rights and industries to the control of the indigenous people (Nhema & Zinyama 2016).

This in turn resulted in postcolonial African states' agriculture, mineral resources and manufacturing industries remaining under the control and ownership of the former colonisers and multinational companies.

As an approach to address the colonial suppression and deprivation, Western countries tried to address some of the development challenges by offering aid and developmental loans to the postcolonial states. However, the aid and loans came with neoliberal conditions that dictated the political, economic, resource allocation and cultural principles to be adhered to by the receivers of the aid (Hernandez 2017). This created the Western hegemony on development that continues

to control the sub-Saharan development narrative. Studies conducted by Craggs (2014), Satiroglu and Choi (2015) and De Leeuw and Hunt (2018) have shown that sub-Saharan African communities are facing a myriad of development challenges that are aligned and related to how they were dispossessed of their land during the colonial era. In addition, these scholars also argued that socio-economic development for the continent would be difficult to achieve without resolving the land question.

Colonialism also took away African epistemic freedom - the freedom for African people to think, theorise, interpret the world and write from where they are located, unencumbered by Eurocentrism (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018). This subjugated African knowledge, values, thoughts and procedures to Eurocentric approaches that were and are still regarded as superior compared with African epistemic approaches (Heleta 2016; Kubota 2020). In sub-Saharan Africa, the evaluation space continues to be practised under the same colonial power matrix that allows the continuity of colonial forms' domination after the end of colonialism. The continuance of the colonial power matrix is regarded as the coloniality of power, which is defined as the structure that was adopted post colonialism and 'refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism but that defined culture, labour, intersubjective relations and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations' (Maldonado-Torres 2007:233). In this article, it is necessary to demonstrate how the coloniality of power has perpetuated the colonial power matrix and how this has affected evaluation and the development sector in general. Monitoring and evaluation are processes that are largely determined by mindset (the worldview, values and reality of the programme designers and funders); hence, they cannot be separated from the influence of those funding and conceptualising these development programmes.

There is a growing demand to decolonise evaluation practice in sub-Saharan Africa by several stakeholders in the international development, such as monitoring and evaluation scholars, commissioners of evaluations, voluntary organisations for professional evaluations (VOPEs) and other organisations strengthening the capacity of

evaluators in the African context. The quest is to decolonise evaluation practice so that it is 'African-rooted' and reflects the African cultural, political, sexual, epistemic and economic context. This growing demand arises from the critique of how Eurocentrism influences the nature of the evaluation discourse, curriculum, theories, models and practice. This concerted reliance on imported and Eurocentric evaluation theories, approaches and methodologies is compounded by Western hegemony on the funding, commissioning and consumption of evaluations in the African context.

The Made in Africa evaluation concept seeks to identify and develop a unique African approach to evaluation. It emphasises that context, culture, history and beliefs shape the nature of evaluations, specifically in the diverse, often complex African reality (AFREA 2021). The call to decolonise has been based on the observation that the majority of evaluations that are performed on development programmes in Africa are conducted by Global North evaluators (Ngwabi & Wildschut 2019). These evaluators use approaches, models and methodologies that are Western and not reflective of the context in which the programmes are being implemented. In addition, the values, culture and worldviews of the evaluators are not aligned with those of the evaluand. At the core of decolonising evaluation, there is a cry for doing away with Western hegemony on epistemology, axiology and ontological approaches in evaluation. Therefore, we argue that an evaluation is an end process that cannot necessarily be decolonised without looking at the whole chain of the development process, from conceptualisation to evaluation in itself. Evaluations are normally at the end of the development process, and decolonising them only without a holistic approach to the broad development field will not yield desired results.

The call for decolonisation in the African context faced the challenge of failing to define what entails decolonisation and what procedures, values, norms, practices, thinking, beliefs and choices needed a change in the evaluation space. We view the approach to decolonisation in the African context as being two-pronged, incorporating contextual and praxis approaches. A contextual approach allows the views of those who yearn for change to be heard and their views to be integrated into

the various components of the evaluation. In other words, a contextual approach opens the door for evaluators, commissioners, stakeholders strengthening evaluation capacity, funders, state apparatus and communities to critique how evaluation practice in Africa reproduces and perpetuates unequal development outcomes and eurocentrism. The praxis approach creates conditions to Africanise evaluation practice (the African praxis and ways of doing, knowing and being). It makes room for organisations, group identities and individuals within evaluation practice to create shared, negotiated understanding and practice whilst knowledge is being generated and disseminated.

The Made in Africa evaluation perspective presented here advocates for a critical look at international development itself, because it is influenced by Western epistemological hegemony. Therefore, we argue that because the conceptualisation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluations of development programmes (carousel of international development) are influenced by the epistemological assumptions from the Global North, the evaluators are also influenced by these epistemological assumptions and worldviews, meaning that the worldview of the targeted beneficiaries is not factored in. Furthermore, we argue that in international development, a programme or project only provides resources to the targeted beneficiaries; however, how the beneficiaries make sense of the resources and use them is largely dependent on their worldview, values, culture and axiological assumptions.

Reshaping how we think about evaluation

This section examines the influence of colonialism on the current international development discourse. The examination will dissect how issues that underpin colonialism are still prevalent in the development discourse, focusing on three key areas: the role of international organisations in perpetuating the colonial racial architecture; examining how colonality of power influences the epistemological, axiological and ontological understanding of development in sub-Saharan Africa; and how the current evaluation practices perpetuate Western hegemony.

Western hegemony in evaluation

Scriven defined an evaluation as the systematic determination of the merit, worth or value of something (often a programme, policy or practice) (Scriven 1991). He went on further to highlight that an evaluation should be contextual, cultural and value-neutral. This perspective is regarded as sacrosanct, and the quality of evaluations is measured using these principles. Scriven's definition indicates that evaluation is regarded as guided by evidence (empirical data or development intervention recipients' lived experiences), which counts only if it is recognised as a potential analysis (using Western-based analytical approaches). In addition, set rules determine which evidence is valid and relevant knowledge and the conditions that an evaluation must fulfil to be regarded as valid.

On paper, evaluations can be regarded as value-, context- and culturally neutral. In addition, evaluations are often thought of as an objective assessment of whether a programme, policy or intervention is working, resulting in objective findings of how it worked and objective recommendations to improve it. The objectivity emphasis is based on the notion of empiricism, that is, the idea that there is one truth that can be discovered through careful application of scientific methods. Thus, as a practice, evaluation makes compelling judgements about the realities judged as relevant to measure accountability and about ways to improve interventions. The emphasis is on the idea that evaluations should be guided by objectivity and replicability, resulting in the need to engage the 'best' evaluators from the Global North.

We are arguing that evaluation is a process that is rooted in people's worldviews and values; hence, the objective truth is always based on someone else's worldview and values. The Western hegemony in evaluation is a creative force that is actively constructing identities and subjectivities, a force that shapes how we think about development and evaluation at the expense of local worldviews, values and identity. The viewpoint by Chilisa et al. (2015) emphasised that:

[I]n developing countries, evaluation has become the worst instrument of epistemological imperialism: an attempt to determine the kinds of facts to be gathered, the appropriate

techniques for gathering and theorising the data and the generation of reports based on these marginalising research processes. (p. 314)

Furthermore, if we agree that evaluation is the lens that we use to judge the merit, worth or value of development interventions - in the case where evaluations are commissioned and conducted by individuals from the Global North, one must ask the question: whose judgement counts? Who sets the yardstick of what is valuable, of merit or what success looks like? These two questions put the spotlight on the evaluation approaches, methodologies and evaluators. The argument put forward here is that any social inquiry should be reflective of the context, culture and values of the communities targeted by the interventions. However, this is not the case, because the mantra is that evaluations should be value-neutral and based on objective empirical truth. Under the Made in Africa evaluation approach, evaluations should be conceptualised in three dimensions - axiological (values), epistemological (the nature of knowledge and ways of knowing and learning about social reality) and ontological (existence, being, becoming and reality). These three dimensions should reflect the communities or simply the recipients of development intervention and policies.

Decolonisation of evaluation may be viewed as the restructuring of power relations in the global construction of evaluation knowledge production, such that the African people may actively participate in the construction of what is evaluated, when it is evaluated, by whom and with what methodologies (Chilisa et al. 2015). We would like to argue that Made in Africa evaluation, in our view, is not limited to the approaches, methodologies and models of evaluation but the whole development field. Focusing on evaluation is like treating the symptoms instead of the root causes of the problem. Made in Africa evaluation does not only focus on evaluation but the whole international development discourse, and it involves a radical reorientation of entire international development evaluation epistemologies and systems of power, which can lead to anxiety and resentment for those who fail to see the violence of colonialism. Made in Africa evaluation focuses on

decentring colonial perspectives and dominant theories and approaches of international development and evaluation, which are presented as the only way to explain the world everywhere.

International development agencies as proxies of Western epistemological hegemony

Development practitioners have been grappling with the question of what difference aid makes to the lives, well-being and living standards of those being assisted. Why is the continent still witnessing increasing poverty, inequality and poor development outcomes decades after the end of colonialism? Several reasons for poor development outcomes, inequality and increasing poverty in sub-Saharan Africa have been proffered, including political instability, poor governance, corruption, weak policies, etc. However, despite these challenges, it has to be observed that several local and international organisations are directly implementing development programmes, and the outcomes are still the same (Dietrich 2013). An expanded view of the Made in Africa evaluation perspective can help explain this development conundrum.

Global South countries still struggle to achieve better development outcomes because international development agencies have become proxies of the Western hegemony on development. We emphasise that these organisations are diverse and heterogeneous. However, they are guided by the same principles and approaches to development and evaluation. Furthermore, it is known that the majority of decision-makers in international development are from the West or espouse the Eurocentric development worldviews and values (Rutazibwa 2018). In cases where there is a decentralised system (where Western funders use local structures to implement programmes in sub-Saharan Africa), the funders or implementing organisations appoint 'technical backstops' based in the West who lead the programme design, programme implementation and evaluation. These technical backstops are based in the Global North and have control over programme decision-making. This perpetuates the asymmetrical global power structure that results in local communities having limited inputs in development programmes targeted at

them. This scenario was explained by Ndlovu-Gatsheni when he said: 'Africa is largely a product of active operations of colonial matrices of power that were well defined ... as invisible imperial designs' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015:15). These invisible imperial designs shape international development, influencing the conceptualisation, implementation and evaluation of development interventions. This also extends to shaping how the local people think about development.

We argue that the technical backstops, programme implementers, commissioners of evaluations and evaluators come with the supposed universality of Western notions of development and evaluation and have failed to critique their inability to theorise non-Western development experiences. Development has been continuously viewed from the axiological, epistemological and ontological perspectives of the West instead of the intended beneficiaries. In addition, whatever the objectives of those involved, development is framed by a distinct asymmetrical relationship between development funders and recipients, mapped onto a 'first world-third world' or 'developed-underdeveloped' divide (Kothari 2006). This also extends to how knowledge that is viewed and produced through the Western epistemological approaches is more valued than that from approaches from sub-Saharan Africa. The current evaluations are guided by theories from the West that are tested on empirical data from sub-Saharan Africa. These dichotomies between the aid providers and aid recipients on paper are just differences in levels of development. However, from our perspective, these dichotomies show the racialised associations in aid and international development that are symbolic expressions of Western superiority (Goudge 2003).

In addition, the racialised discourses in international development underpin Western ideologies, which influence the understanding and representation of the third world (Kothari 2006). An examination of the various development theories that influence international development shows that issues such as inequality, poverty, underdevelopment, climate change adaptation, etc., are never examined through the historical racial dimensions that influence them. This is because of the Western epistemological perspective that race is a personal attribute

that is outdated and misplaced in the progressive integration of impersonalised individuals within modern political and economic spheres (Shilliam 2014). Given all these factors, one can argue that international development has always been and continues to be defined by the hierarchical ordering and reordering of humanity into racially delimited groups. Western hegemonic ideologies always offer significant claims to those they are directed against, and these are supported by evaluations legitimating norms, theories, models and ideas. The answer to our development challenges in sub-Saharan Africa lies in our understanding of our history and programmes; therefore, evaluations should be based on this history.

Coloniality of power in evaluations

Coloniality of power continues to dictate the thought processes of the international development space, influencing the conceptualisation of development programmes, implementation and evaluation. Coloniality of power is defined as the structure that was adopted at the dawn of postcolonialism and

[R]efers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labour, intersubjective relations and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations (Maldonado-Torres 2007:233).

Rather than breaking away from the colonising attitudes of the past, there is greater evidence of continuity in the preservation of Western-centred attitudes, as well as arrogant confidence in the almost unquestioned validity of science and Western knowledge (Briggs & Sharp 2004). The incomplete decolonisation led to the failure to deconstruct the colonial social engineering and the subsequent power matrix (often referred to as the coloniality of power), which continues to shape the international development sector.

Therefore, we argue that colonialism did not simply end when the settlers relinquished political control but continued through

a complex and systematic mechanisms post-independence. This affected the African development worldview, values and epistemological orientation. Coloniality of power in evaluations is present and is used to define what are regarded as the necessary skills, experience and background of evaluators. It also depends on asymmetrical power relations in which blackness personifies a lack of evaluation skills and ignorance whilst whiteness signals competence and knowledge. It also shapes and defines the epistemological discourse in evaluations, with Western models being parachuted to examine social reality in Africa despite the differences in context, worldview and approach. However, if we accept that all knowledge is socially constructed and historically situated and that evaluations should be able to account for human experiences, then should we trust the evaluation methodologies and theories that were created by the most privileged during the colonial era?

There is also anecdotal and tacit evidence that shows that international development organisations perpetuate coloniality of power through a system. The commissioners of evaluations are from the Global North, who prefer evaluators from the Global North because of their perceived skills. In turn, the appointed evaluators prefer methodologies that are either dictated to them by the commissioners or those who align with the Western epistemological underpinnings. Conversely, sub-Saharan African aid recipients and evaluators are relegated to a subservient role, where even if they are involved in the evaluation process, they have no power or avenues to influence how the evaluation process unravels. In addition, Eurocentric institutions (institutions that train evaluators and those that commission evaluations) and processes that obfuscate white privilege and positions of power mould evaluators from sub-Saharan Africa.

The Global North does not only influence the development priorities and the evaluation process, but it extends to controlling the evaluation discourse narrative. This can be illustrated by the history of issues prioritised in evaluation in sub-Saharan Africa. Issues such as indigenous knowledge systems, transforming evaluation, culturally sensitive evaluation, feminist evaluation, cultural competence

and gender-responsive evaluation have been championed by the Global North as approaches that address the coloniality of power in evaluation. However, there is a limited drive to address the current and historical role played by race and colonisation in shaping the international development space and the practice of evaluation in sub-Saharan Africa. In this article, we argue that these approaches are being proposed as a form of redress for the deficiencies in failing to reveal sociality by the use of Eurocentric evaluation methodologies and theories. In general, the drive to redress the deficiencies is regarded as informed by white guilt, which is defined as 'the dysphoria felt by ... [the Global North] who see their group as responsible for illegitimate advantage held over other racial groups, such as Africans' (Iyer, Leach & Crosby 2003).

As the social psychological perspective articulates that social groups prefer to be at the top of societal hierarchies rather than at the bottom, we can argue that the Global North values their development superiority over the Global South. However, there is an ample reason to believe that the Global North also might feel deficient about its colonial history and its implications for poverty, inequality and underdevelopment in the Global South. People who feel guilty are very uncomfortable with the fact that they or their groups are responsible for causing harm to others, and thus, they attempt to make restitution to the victim (Butt 2007; Iyer et al. 2003; Iyer, Leach & Pedersen 2004). Unfortunately, white guilt has done much more harm to the Made in Africa evaluation and the broader international development space; the same white Global North evaluators have found themselves leading discussions on transformation, inequality, poverty and racism from their privileged position without necessarily letting the disadvantaged lead the discourse. We argue that although white guilt broadens the 'cause', it cannot articulate the pain that we feel as Global South populations suffering from coloniality of power in international development. What white guilt does is to expropriate our pain as black evaluators without the expropriator feeling the pain of black Africans who are caught up in a maze of coloniality of power.

‘White gaze’ on development: Whose viewpoint is it anyway?

In addition to coloniality of power and white guilt, there is also what Pailey (2020) called the white gaze in international development. The manifestation of the ‘white gaze of development’ happens whereby the Western perspective is assumed to be neutral and therefore universally applicable and appropriate. Pailey (2020) argued that international development suffers from a ‘white gaze’ problem in which whiteness is considered the standard category against which nonwhite people are judged. She defined the white gaze of international development as follows:

[T]he white gaze of development is measuring black, brown and non-white people against the standard of northern whiteness, and taking their political, economic and social processes as a norm [...] Development uses that standard of northern whiteness to measure economic, political and social processes of people in the so-called global South. (Pailey 2020:6)

This definition emphasises that the ‘white gaze’ of development assumes whiteness as the primary referent of power, prestige and progress across the world. It equates whiteness with wholeness and superiority (Pailey 2020; Shilliam 2014). The white gaze is centred on white privilege; in practice, white privilege does not leave evidence, unlike oppression. It is also difficult to examine the white gaze because there are no tools to examine the very thing that is not expressed.

The ‘white gaze’ of development measures the political, socio-economic and cultural processes of sub-Saharan Africa against a standard of the Global North and finds them incomplete, wanting, inferior or regressive. Such views and perceptions shape how development programmes are designed and evaluated. In essence, this pushes the notion that white is always right and the West is always best, whereby this perception has persisted in international development and evaluation.

In the evaluation space, Global North whiteness is also propounded as a descriptor of expertise, whether real or perceived. Even local evaluators kowtow to the Global North’s external imposition of worldviews,

values, social reality, methodologies and approaches in evaluation. We want to make it explicit that we are not saying that evaluators from the Global North cannot contribute to the evaluation discourse in sub-Saharan Africa, but rather, the Eurocentric perspective cannot be the sole gaze by which the development programmes in sub-Saharan Africa are to be understood and therefore held as the truth.

The current approach to international development assumes that development takes place in a nonracialised environment, thereby disputing the white gaze characterisation, and that issues of race do not permeate the development space. Kothari (2006:20) took this viewpoint further by arguing that the silence around 'race' allows Western development and evaluation practitioners to avoid being accountable for the powers, privileges and inequalities that continue to flow from whiteness. We argue that race is a part of our social construction, which decides how people relate to and influence their actions and perceptions of development interventions. Therefore, if those in the development space fail to acknowledge and examine the role of race in the development space, the evaluations they commission will fail to be true social inquiry and will be divorced from social reality.

The implication of coloniality of power and 'white gaze' on evaluation in the Global South Colonised epistemological order

We postulate that the African evaluation epistemological order suffers from the white gaze and coloniality of power and that it can only be decolonised by Africans shaping their development trajectory. Evaluation being led by a nonlocal is demonstrably paternalistic and rooted in colonial beliefs of Western superiority. Most development interventions could be considered racial projects because they create and reproduce 'structures of domination based on racial significations and identities' (Omi & Winant 2015:28). Furthermore, the evaluators and evaluations do not deal with the elephant in the room, 'race'; race and power are absent from evaluation discourse in Africa. What is critically absent is how colonisation (and race, as its tool) caused the

current impoverishment of the communities in the Global South - the *modus operandi* is to focus on the present.

Evaluators tend to have blinkers where issues of race, power and the neoliberal approach to development are encountered in the evaluation. Whiteness is capital in evaluation that can be traded for winning evaluation bids. Even as local evaluators, we are reproducing the colonial and neoliberal hierarchies of development. Western hegemony has influenced how we think about development and the methods we use for monitoring and evaluation.

Whose social reality?

An evaluation makes a judgement of the worthiness or value of development interventions. An evaluation is based on social reality and should be able to deconstruct the causal web of conditions underlying development interventions and examine the underlying mechanisms that the worthiness or value of development interventions. Social reality can only be understood by deconstructing the underlying mechanisms, and this can only happen through the use of worldviews, values and cultural lens of the beneficiaries of the programme. However, this is not happening because of limitations in methodologies under the guise of the objectivity, value-neutrality and impartiality of the evaluation. We postulate that current evaluations do not reveal the social reality but perpetuate the Western hegemony's grip on the Global South development narrative. Evaluations are performed in such a way that colonialism, imperialism and its contemporary manifestations of neoliberalism and globalisation have no impact on the current development status.

Former colonisers continue to amass power in subtle ways that enable them to continue influencing what the formerly colonised want, think and aspire for - holding the coloniser as the ideal, the ultimate example of a perfect evaluation and ultimate development. This is evident in the evaluation approaches that are regarded as the gold standard, the technical backstop scattered in the Global North who control how monitoring and evaluation should pan out and Global

North evaluators taking the lead in evaluations that are happening in the Global South, accounting to Western donors, not local communities. We argue that most of the evaluation approaches and methodologies proposed by the Global North scratch the surface and do not reflect social reality; however, these approaches are promoted by the commissioners, evaluators and funders with limited knowledge of the context, local values and the people who are the receivers of the aid. Evaluators, instead of looking at narrow indicators that are aligned to the programme, need to develop tools that allow them to explore and study the behaviours and propensities at the root of society and how those behaviours and propensities vary across space, time and individual circumstance.

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Any programme design and evaluation should be rooted in the socio-historic context of the community. If evaluations and programme design do not touch on these root causes of underdevelopment, then 50 years later we are still going to talk about the same issues. In addition, there is an inherent need to realise that part of decolonising international development requires an understanding that those in sub-Saharan Africa are not passively awaiting support from the international community but are actively working to improve their situation.

We concur that development interventions do not necessarily produce results, but they offer resources - the results depend on how recipients respond to resources, and this varies according to context (Randell, Greenhalgh & Dowding 2015). If that is the case, then the programme beneficiaries should not be passive subjects who have no say in the design of the programmes that are aimed at bringing social change into their lives; instead, they should lead in the design and their imprint should be on the evaluation. Programmes are not supposed to address the needs of the funding organisations but of the targeted populations.

It is pertinent to note that a significant impediment to decolonising development is the use of Western indicators, systems and frameworks. The M&E process is also based on the theories of change decided at the design phase that occurs outside the context in which the programme is going to be implemented. Therefore, if the design phase is not based on the epistemological, axiological and ontological factors that reflect the worldview, values, context and culture of the beneficiaries, then the evaluation will not be a true reflection of social reality. Involving local community members in the design process helps to ensure that indigenous ways of thinking are included and that the theory of change is culturally relevant. Allowing local communities to determine their markers of success would address the inability of most existing M&E systems to truly engage with a context as it is currently and would reduce the likelihood of M&E systems reshaping non-Western contexts to fit preconceived ideas.

Methodologically, we argue that M&E systems and the common overemphasis on objectivity and generalisable evidence-making fail to capture the realities and nuances of the context in which an intervention is implemented. Evaluations are built on the assumption that there is only one way of knowing; we argue that this is only true if we universally have the same worldview, values, culture and context. Informal nuances wield more power in the evaluation and programme design than the formalised structures. Evaluation commissioners have argued that they have been colour-blind under the guise of objectivity and replicability; however, they impose their worldviews, values and cultural influences on evaluations.

CONCLUSION

We would like to conclude by asking the question: why hasn't there been progress in Made in Africa evaluation for the last decade? Are we scared to upset the apple cart? Although there has been a yearning for a change in approach to evaluation to bring in the African worldview, those who control the levers of power have limited interest in changing

the status quo. Until Global North evaluators and commissioners confront how they benefit from the racial hierarchies that underpin the evaluation field and actively work to upend their unearned privilege, the evaluation and international development will always suffer from a Western hegemony problem. As the Global South, we also need to commission our own evaluations and, most importantly, find ways of funding our development. Finally, as evaluators and development practitioners from the Global South, we need to liberate ourselves first from Western epistemological hegemony.

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Authors' contributions

Both S.M. and S.M.M. contributed to the conceptualisation of the study, while S.M. drafted the first draft of the article, which was reviewed and edited by S.M.M.

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Chapter 5

Approaches to embedding Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Made in Africa Evaluations

Nedson Pophiwa and Umali Saidi

ABSTRACT

In this chapter we make a case for weaving indigenous knowledge systems with monitoring and evaluation of interventions targeted at communities on the African continent. Current efforts do not make explicit reference to indigenous knowledge in Made in Africa Evaluation (MAE). Indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) are implied as the defining aspect of MAE being called upon to be fused with existing evaluation systems and practices in order to enhance evaluation in African communities. This paper explores aspects of IKS which challenge western hegemonic epistemologies in evaluation approaches and practices in Africa. The aim and objective are to call for enrichment of the MAE in setting the agenda and bring agency to evaluation practices in Africa against centuries of unsustainable developmental practices that continue to under develop the continent. It is argued that associations such as AfrEA should strive to become knowledge hubs which pursue the mission to re-project and reposition Africa within the existing continuum of global knowledge. The paper makes several recommendations for fusing IKS with MAE in a bid to bring the African voice to the fore in evaluations.

Keywords: evaluation, epistemology, hegemony, MAE, AfrEA, IKS

INTRODUCTION

The African evaluation landscape has come of age. Today, there are almost 30 national evaluation networks or Voluntary Organisations for Professional Evaluation (VOPEs) across the continent. These institutions have played key roles in developing guidelines for evaluation and bringing together experts on various platforms to discuss topical issues on evaluation which concern their areas of work. In terms of evaluation capacity development, there are more universities, training institutions and several short-course training providers across the continent offering Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E). In countries such as Uganda, South Africa and Benin, evaluation has garnered political support to the point of becoming ministries or departments of the state. One of the underlying reasons for such developments has been a heed to calls for a ‘return’ to the source, which have been happening since the late 1970s as a direct response to Euro-western-induced theories of change as implemented in Africa (Cabral, 1973). Much of the literature, especially that which was produced in the 1990s, when scholars began to clamor for “made in Africa” approaches, focused more on lobbying for change in “business as usual” approaches to evaluating programmes on the continent (Chilisa, 2015). In 1999, the African Evaluation association AFREA was formed and this marked the beginning of a more structured approach to addressing concerns of the MAE project.

Despite the strides which have been made, there is evidence to the effect that for decades the African voice has demanded the continent to tell its own story (Olaopa and Ayodele, 2021). Scholarship has revealed that what has been lacking is the political will, enabling economic and cultural conditions for Africa to tell its own story (Mapitsa and Ngwato, 2020; Mbava and Chapman, 2020; White, 2009). Political unwillingness, economic disadvantages and so on, have acted as barriers from which Euro-western epistemologies have been feeding on in order to stifle growth, and sustainable developmental programmes in Africa (Davies, 2018). There is no doubt that colonialism, and neo-colonialism, upheld stereotyping of the continent, and its people, rendering poverty and underdevelopment as synonymous with Africa (Cameron, 1993).

Likewise, evaluation methodologies and approaches in Africa have come under scrutiny as scholars are calling for change to the status quo regarding the perpetuation of Euro-western epistemologies in evaluation of African development (Chilisa, 2015; Chilisa & Mertens, 2021). Chinsamy and Koitsiwe, (2016 p.137) proclaim that Africa needs ‘to build on its own strengths’ if sustainable development is to be achieved. As the paper will show, this ‘should involve the remobilisation of the continent’s abundant Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS), which combine local skills, practices, technologies and innovations developed and nurtured through generations, and which enable communities to survive over time’ (Chinsamy and Koitsiwe 2017 p.137).

In this chapter, we build a case for embedding IKS in Made in Africa Evaluation (MAE) after realising that there is no explicit reference to indigenous knowledge systems in the existing writings. It is the argument of this paper that the fusion of evaluation with IKS approaches will bring about the success of Made in Africa Evaluation initiatives which are more contextually relevant to African challenges. Olaopa and Ayodele, (2021) rightly refer to ‘ingenuity’ and ‘innovation’ as key in promoting the African story. Interestingly, ‘ingenuity’ and ‘innovation’ are part of the African indigenous knowledge (AIK), and innovation, hence the AIK & I concept. Olaopa and Ayodele (2021 p.1) believe, AIK&I has ‘great potential for reducing some of Africa’s interrelated development challenges listed to be addressed in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).’ For any society to survive, innovation is key because it depends largely on creativity ‘for the sustainability of any economy’s productivity and fiscal activities’ (Olaopa and Ayodele, 2021 p.1).

THE STATE OF RESEARCH

Tracing ‘evaluation’

Every developmental praxis has its roots somewhere to which it can be systematically traced. Mbava and Chapman (2020) trace the roots of evaluation to United States as a concept used to evaluate the US government’s social programmes during the eras of the ‘New Deal’

and ‘Great Society’. From there on, the contemporary outlook of evaluation is a result of how the concept developed, was advanced, and broadened to a ‘highly globalised world and is now practiced in a multicultural world and in complex contexts, impacting the lives of various and diverse communities globally (Mbava & Chapman, 2020 p.2). In the context of Africa, the African Evaluation Association (AfrEA) observed and resolved that ‘the role of values and culture in African contexts should be evident in current knowledge systems and infused in modelling evaluation in Africa’ (Mbava & Chapman, 2020 pp.2-3).

Given that evaluation has become a global reality and phenomenon, it is important that values and contextual realities be part of African evaluation praxis, hence the call by AfrEA to have an Afrocentric evaluation in both theory and practice ‘as a response to the imperatives of African cultural contexts’ (Mbava & Chapman, 2020 p.3). Advocates of MAE (Chilisa, 2015; Chilisa & Mertens, 2021) believe that this will guarantee sustainability since Euro-western approaches, have failed to reverse underdevelopment in the continent. They lament that current evaluation approaches have excluded indigenous people who are beneficiaries of developmental interventions (Chilisa, 2015; Chilisa & Mertens, 2021).

Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS)

Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) are a defining aspect of African existence (Olaopa & Ayodele, 2021). Africans have always been able to identify their own problems or issues that affect them during the precolonial period. An example is with regards to military warfare, whereby the famous Zulu King, Shaka, needed no western army general to school him on his military innovative techniques. Shaka, for instance, innovatively formed a sustainable weapon, ‘the assegai,’ among other systems of governance and military strategies (Peires, 2009). Further, in African medicine, Asakitikpi (2020) demonstrates that African traditional treating and diagnosis of diseases were, and continue to be,

holistic as the social, psychological, and even the spiritual, are part of the diagnosis and treatment of ailments.

Decolonialisation concepts, or projects, at the dawn of independence called for a return to the source by most Pan-Africanists such as Ngugi (1987), Cabral (1973), Chinweizu et al. (1981), Fanon (1978) to mention a few. While at the surface, it appears as a return to subscribing to African values, culture, and identities, crucially the call by the aforesaid African thinkers was to have Africans reconnect with aspects that had traditionally been at the centre of African existence. It follows, therefore, that the African relies on IKS as a resource for solving 'daily and developmental challenges through their various innovative ideas and uses in order to improve their living standard and quality of life' (Olaopa & Ayodele, 2021 p.1). Hence, western philanthropic interventions, and donor activities in Africa, have tried to pin development against IKS concepts, however, without the urgency it requires (Chilisa & Mertens, 2021). From the outlook, inference to IKS has been cosmetically projected by western approaches with the hope to achieve outcomes one hopes would guarantee self-sustenance by Africans in order to improve their livelihoods in their own geopolitical spaces and landscapes.

At independence, Africa sought to rebuild its communities in areas of politics, education, health, infrastructure development, among others, following the ravages by colonialism or apartheid. Colonialism brought Africa and the Euro-west into contact resulting in Africans adopting practices brought by imperialism. In this endeavor, international institutions, and their agencies, such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) moved a gear up to 'facilitate', support and monitor developmental-related initiatives globally. For instance, the Kariba Dam project in the then Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) was funded by IMF (Saidi, 2020a) with main objectives to provide development initiatives, and support to white settlers. The BaTonga people, whose ancestral home has been the Zambezi valley remained languishing in abject poverty and have not benefited directly from the Kariba Dam project itself (Saidi, 2020b).

Limited recognition of IKS in development discourse

While IKS is acknowledged by international institutions, and their agencies, working in collaboration with local governments, tend to water down its application in real world contexts. One way of integrating the locale into the development initiatives, was obviously to take a bottom-up approach, rather than top-down, from which ideas exemplified in the body of IKS needed to be included in the developmental agendas. However, in practice, the Euro-western imposition has sidelined IKS. Olaopa and Ayodele, (2021) bemoan the silence by the UN SDGs on IKS. This silence on IKS in the developmental agenda, is a systematic exclusion of the indigenous people from the developmental agenda itself, yet, Africans are supposedly the beneficiaries of the development advanced.

Studies have shown that IKS-based policy formulation and developmental agenda are sustainable in the sense that indigenous people will be encouraged and get to accept development ideas; they will get themselves fully involved during implementation and evaluation processes (Chinsamy & Koitsiwe, 2016). Challenges of developmental nature that indigenous people face are usually exemplified by unemployment, balance of payment problem, climate change, environmental degradation, poor resource management, hunger, diseases, among other indicators. Yet, indigenous people usually benefit from the connections they have to their natural environment using their capabilities, skills, knowledge and technologies in a sustainable manner (Saidi, 2020a) to which imposed interventions often than not have resulted in further disruptions. Therefore, IKS usually guide African survival even in a globalised world (Asakitikpi, 2020).

Although some have dismissed IKS as unscientific, Click or tap here to enter text. it is heartwarming that generally, scientific and indigenous knowledge systems have increasingly been accepted as two areas of expertise complementing each other (Masinde, 2015). Makhado et al., (2014) demonstrate how small-scale farmers in southern Africa have adapted to drought conditions using indigenous knowledge noting, however, the weaknesses of solely relying on IKS as technologically

driven practices have advantages they play where IKS is weak. Thus, accumulated knowledge is always viewed as working for the locals; and the question within MAE would then have to be addressing the levels of success and sustainability.

There has been a shift from Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) designed and directed towards achieving global development by 2015; to Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDGs) 2016-2030. This shift, generally raising crucial sustainable development issues, did not even achieve goals as anticipated prior to 2015, further showing the inadequacy of the concept of sustainable development (Masinde, 2015). Thus, to address gaps such as the above, the focus of evaluation in African countries should adopt made in Africa approaches to evaluation (Chilisa, 2015). Evaluation of projects, services/products or systems needs to explicitly draw its energy from IKS make evaluation IKS-based from which human capacity development in evaluation, practices, models and ideologies be pinned on IKS as the point of departure.

IKS defines African existence for the simple reason that indigenous knowledge is a key resource Africans use to engage with each other and the environment for the common good of all as well as their survival. IKS is entrenched in real-life experiences which in turn define their worldview, relations, practices creating a system far removed from the Euro-western celebrated orthodox scientific systems (Asakitikpi, 2020). The crucial aspect of IKS is that practices are embedded in the daily livelihoods of the people. For instance, when the Covid-19 hit the globe, most African countries' economies and state of health care systems could not easily cater for the needs of the populations against the pandemic (Dandara et al., 2021; Mphekgwana et al., 2021). A number of communities in Africa resorted to indigenous herbs, foods, concoctions and other practices to augment available orthodox systems to manage the pandemic. This offers a glimpse of the capacity to utilise inborn local skills and traditions to facilitate decision-making and modify practices to resolve the challenges societies may face from time to time (Olaopa & Ayodele, 2021).

Hence, to omit or exclude IKS in developmental initiatives is tantamount to creating unsustainable developmental programmes or services which makes evaluation weak and sometimes, misplaced. It is also to deny the majority of Africans, most of whom live in the rural or remote areas, from participating using their ingenuity to drive their developmental agenda, despite the many campaigns by international developmental agencies calling for an IKS-centered point of departure.

It is unfair to place blame institutions such as the UN, IMF or World Bank for gracing developmental blue prints devoid of IKS & I for implementation mostly in Africa. The challenge is that IKS has not received adequate documentation. Agency to IKS should, therefore, be brought to evaluation of projects, services and products or systems. However, African countries need not 'convince' anyone or attempt to convince 'all and sundry of the significance of these African resources' (Olaopa & Ayedele, 2021; Rodney, 1973), but tell their story. As such, epistemologically inclined bodies such as AfrEA and African governments should, therefore, support research, documentation and various practices premised on IKS & I. In doing so, the Nigerian proverb that, a tiger does not parade its tigeritude (Soyinka, 1967) is noted because the continent owes no one an apology.

Modernisation and imperialism, premised on epistemologies that push the scientific validity of knowledge. imposed their world-views on African epistemes. Interestingly, paradigms for imposition were not designed to convince recipients but were calculated to force Africans into submission, disrupting IKS in the process (Saidi, 2020a). In other words, IKS in African countries was never allowed to be documented, practiced or preserved. The idea was to delete Africa's epistemes from existence and replace it by that which was imposed (Saidi, 2019). Not all was lost, however, as such IKS preservation is key as this accords rebirth and reshaping of continental identity, systematically or otherwise.

Another dimension that suffices regarding appreciation of IKS as a determinant of African livelihoods are aspects of evaluation which

involve theorisation and practice. The realm of theorisation could be attributed to the roots of the evaluation theory itself, which Kirkhart, (2010 p.400) believes has several functions, notably, to provide the language as well as to reflect ‘priorities and values, sets agendas and defines conversations, provides both professional and public identity, and provides knowledge base of evaluation.’ The relationship between IKS and evaluation (for those that have IKS as central) is to realise validity of actions and interventions undertaken with the objective of improving human endeavor in a sustainable way.

SUGGESTED APPROACHES TO EMBEDDING IKS IN MADE IN AFRICA EVALUATIONS

Although there is a marked improvement in political and economic systems in Africa, Mbaku, (2013) observed that the continent is eager to address economic development but the challenge is that most Africans remain trapped in extreme poverty. By 2011 the UN reported that 81% of countries with high poverty index were in Africa with 50% of these having extreme poverty. Fast-forward to 2021, conditions were reported as having been worsened with 42% of the population in sub-Saharan Africa continuing to live below the poverty datum line. The advent of the covid-19 pandemic, officially announced by the World Health Organisation in 2020, stifled efforts to alleviate poverty in Africa and elsewhere. The discussion hence elaborates on several points related to MAE and the need to fuse it with IKS.

In the global development space, there has been a tendency to overlook the importance of African IKS in realising development goals right from the times of MDGs to SDGs. Realising that Africans continue to be trapped by underdevelopment, the UN proposed that if by 2015 Africa successfully implemented MDGs, this would guarantee sustainable development, improved services and programmes on the continent. Development indicators such as wealth creation, employment generation, safeguarding the environments, resuscitating and

sustaining the culture of the people were used as the rallying points to initiate sustainable development interventions. In the context of SDGs, it remains to be seen by 2030 whether missed opportunities of 2015 will not be repeated.

Thus, reading the SDGs 2030, one notes the intentions of the UN blue print currently in force, which if diligently pursued by all countries, regardless of status, are hoped to lead to sustainable development and improved services. For Africa, this comes at no opportune time as IKS&I has the potential of becoming the bedrock of implementation. IKS & I can be the springboard to guarantee attainment of the UN SDGs by 2030. The advantage is that IKS & I have always been utilised since time immemorial, but have not adequately been accepted, promoted and invested in by scholarship, governments, and developmental agencies.

An example which demonstrates the efficacy of IKS is the experience of a community in South-East of Zimbabwe which was displaced by overflowing of a river. When the Tokwe-Mukosi people were relocated after flooding in 2014 following the construction of the Tugwi-Mukosi Dam (Nhodo et al., 2021; Mucherera & Spiegel, 2021) the displaced population were housed in an area called Chingwizi. Chingwizi was a heavy scorpion-infested area, so these new inhabitants of Chingwizi made home with dangerous scorpions from which people suffered bites, and even deaths in some cases. Saidi (2020b) reports that the Chingwizi people applied IK and skills to eradicate the scorpion threat. If one was to conduct an evaluation of the impact of the Tugwi-Mukosi relocation project on the inhabitants of the area such an evaluation would need to gain an understanding of the indigenous approaches which the inhabitants of the area used to fight the scorpion plague in the area, and not only to focus on the extent to which the relocation project met its intended outcomes as set in an M&E framework. Another difficulty, however, of evaluating such national projects is the extent to which the state regulates access to evaluators and even researchers who want to work on understanding the impact of dam projects on local residents (Nhodo et al (2021) and Mucherera and Spiegel, (2021). The discussion makes a case for some of the following approaches to embedding IKS in MAE evaluations.

***Emphasising cultural competences,
contextual relevance and cultural validity***

MAE-induced research should, therefore, interrogate evaluation practices by emphasising cultural competences, contextual relevance and cultural validity as requirements of an evaluation process. If this is not given urgent attention, Africa risks remaining at the periphery of the periphery, again, because each cultural, and contextual set-up deserves to tell its own story, challenge hegemony and suggest its pathway even as it rides on existing efforts from other regions dealing with seemingly similar issues of concern. This is what Mbava and Chapman (2020 p.2) reflect on when they note that there is need for meaningful engagement seeing that ‘In an African context, the implication has been the perpetuation of one-size-fits-all evaluation methods that have not fully served both beneficiaries and policy decision makers.’

Kirkhart (2010) spoke of validity as central to evaluation for the simple reason that ‘validity’ is a property of evaluation praxis, and that there are ‘numerous intersecting cultural identifications and assumptions; therefore, validity too must be multicultural’ (p.401). This is what is poised by socio-technical as well as ANT theories when they express systems operations, their dynamisms and relations noting how they are inter-linked. It generally means that sustainability of policies, programmes and projects can be guaranteed when they are formulated on the basis of the IKS&I from which evaluation will come to be conditioned by multiculturalism. One recalls how Lezaun, (2017 p.11) emphasised that humans as agents ‘are active and capable of making complicated decisions’, therefore, using stereotypical and imported paradigms may not result in intended outcomes.

Hence, the nature and outlook of the evaluation theory chosen should be the basis on which African practitioners be guided in their selection of epistemologies, appropriate procedures and methods or paradigms without threatening culture or making it simplistic and theoretically stereotypical which thus threaten validity. The failure of western evaluation paradigms in Africa could be attributed to the fact that the evaluation theory conditioning evaluation practices cannot be

reconciled because theoretical underpinnings used, and the context of practice are not culturally congruent (Kirkhart, 2010). The cultural location of the evaluation theory and the cultural dimensions of the context should therefore be reconciled, and IKS & I comes in as a reconciliatory aspect against the understanding that IKS are culture based; and those cultures are plural rather than singular. As such institutions, governments and/or development agencies, have to impart knowledge, values, and beliefs as well as skills 'that are also shared and communicated across cohorts' (Kirkhart, 2010 p.401). Because IKS & I is based on cultural formulations, the caveats that apply to culture such as multiplicity (diversity within groupings), fluidity (shifting intersecting boundaries demarcated by culture), and non-neutrality (premised on power dynamics) also apply to IKS & I. Explain the more appropriate cultural values inherent in IKS systems.

The above reflects Makhado et al.'s (2014 p.265) message that 'neither indigenous nor technologically driven practices should be seen as panacea on their own, but integrating the two sets of practices could optimise adaptation by small-scale farmers.' In other words, amalgamations are required wherein evaluation must consider, indigenous and technically-driven practices. The ethical dimension in this regard, however, must ultimately guarantee and protect the vulnerable. With this in mind, reflections on the debates on contextualised evaluations (Mapitsa and Ngwato 2020) befittingly comes into play.

The need for contextualised evaluation theory

Another point to consider is that despite strides in MAE, there is still evidence of western theories being applied in evaluations, without due care for their relevance. Mbava and Chapman, (2020) argue that the major challenge with current evaluation systems in Africa has been that 'the theory and practice of evaluation largely emerged from Euro-western worldviews and continue to evolve in a manner that addresses the needs of Euro-western interests. The importance of focusing on evaluation, as Africa continues to search for answers to sustainable development, means that governments have increasingly

moved to build state capacities to evaluate systems, programmes and products. It also means the private sector, and non-profit organisations have come to use evaluation as a tool for accountability wherein all aspects of livelihoods, and developmental projects, are subjected to evaluation – assessed against some quality criteria deemed ‘universal’ or global. However, in challenging Euro-western epistemologies, questions which continue to be asked are geared at establishing whose values and world views should inform such evaluation processes and designs.

It is, therefore, encouraging to note that Africa as a region has taken center stage in becoming active to debate and call for an ‘indigenised’ or contextualised evaluation theory. For Mapitsa and Ngwato, (2020 pp.1-2) the preoccupation for Africa is to:

define itself beyond its roots in the global aid industry and the still-dominant unequal power dynamics of international donor/local beneficiary relationships’ prompting the African Evaluation Guidelines (AEG) to ‘move beyond “developed country” assumptions about methods, program design, and development outcomes....

The above is an interesting dimension, which also brings attention to ethical decision-making in evaluations because the ultimate goal should be to have ‘evaluators who understand the local context and local stakeholder relationships’ (Mapitsa & Ngwato, 2020 p.2). Secondly, evaluators should be trained and have tools for dictating ‘multiple layers of power and complex webs of relationships between stakeholders’ (p.2).

Africa is positioned to benefit from developing evaluation paradigms since, it has already been exposed to Euro-western evaluation approaches but now require the support of African value systems. Hence, Africa will not be throwing away positive Euro-western approaches as it were, but adapting them to suit the African contextual realities, as Chilisa, (2015 p.17) rightly noted that humans learn from each other and adoption is ‘a good practice that is supported by African value systems.’ Clearly, one reads a pluralistic evaluation theory and

practices as compared to having domineering or imposed ‘big brother’ evaluation paradigms that have proved to be distant and foreign to beneficiaries. Dualism promotes the African voice to be heard; African epistemology, ontology and axiology in evaluation to have space and power to question imposed methods seeking attention in evaluation.

Therefore, it is time that AfrEA gets to promote and push even further calls to have empirical research designed to guarantee Afrocentric epistemologies in evaluation as well as provide knowledge and skills to query interventions whose theoretical underpinnings may be devoid of the residue that addresses indigenous knowledge. AfrEA is busy doing this. Assess their progress and recommend improvements. The major question to be addressed should be, as Mbava and Chapman (2020) suggest, whose value system should inform evaluation enquiry within an Afrocentric context? Fusing African IKS & I cannot be over emphasised and studies (Asakitikpi, 2020; Chilisa, 2015; Chilisa & Mertens, 2021) vehemently agree on this point. What needs to be addressed is the ‘how’ part which, for instance, Mbava and Chapman (2020) do not adequately address. While Chilisa (2015) recommended adoption of orthodox values and practices into the Afrocentric context, the ‘how’ question remains blurred. Whether adapting or adopting Euro-western evaluation theories and practices or fusing IKS with orthodox scientific epistemologies, what needs to be clarified are the parameters within which such mechanisms can be done. Suggest concrete improvement strategies.

Power dynamics in the evaluation landscape

Power dynamics exist in evaluation. Such power structures should be questioned and the process has already been set in motion by decoloniality scholars who call for epistemic justice in addressing issues of identity and representation between the Global North and Global South (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015). Rightly so, discourses challenging western epistemologies have been pushed by debates in localities of Native Americans, New Zealand Maoris and Australian Aborigines (Mbava & Chapman, 2020) and the African region is, sadly, lagging behind in adding its own voice.

Evaluations do not happen in an apolitical context because there are power dynamics at hand largely defined by observation (Kirkhart, 2010). Compounded to this is that Africa as a region has a colonial history, meaning:

...the varied landscape of tertiary education for evaluators, public sector capacity, access to information, and political incentives have all shaped the region's political economy in ways that fundamentally impact how evaluation needs to be understood and practiced (Mapitsa & Ngwato, 2020 p.2).

Therefore, challenging western epistemologies should not be based on citing cosmetic developmental initiatives in the region. Instead, it is to re-engage all aspects that are linked to evaluation including reference to ethics which are abstract sets of norms. Hence, clear guidelines are required to be formulated, against references to global guidelines often linked to the Australian Evaluation Association (AEA) and the American Evaluation Association (AmEA). AfrEA adopted the AEG in 2002 and despite being revised in 2006/2007 and 2019, there is a dearth of literature or research about the guidelines (Mapitsa & Ngwato, 2020).

There is also a need to challenge western epistemologies at the level of expression as well. When evaluation reports are availed, stakeholders deserve to access the knowledge created for their benefit to which the media is also an important vehicle through which such knowledge is used by intermediaries to reach beneficiaries. However, the language of expression is a key factor in this regard; both the language used in the evaluation reports and the language used to translate the knowledge contained in the evaluation reports. When Mpofu and Salawu, (2018) speak of the need to use indigenous languages in the media as an investment, they are battling with sustainability aspects of the semiotic medium of expression that represents indigenous epistemologies. Among the many advantages of using indigenous languages involves indigenous language media as an essential tool for conveying communication for development.

Interventions should be premised on indigenous epistemologies

In this paper, we call for a broad-based take wherein the very identification of challenges that indigenous people face should be locally based and formulated. Interventions should be premised on indigenous epistemologies, and the affected communities invited to actively involved in the implementation of the programmes or policies. When these are tightly established and centred on indigenous people's value systems, evaluation paradigms will then be formulated using the same mechanisms. Euro-western interventions can then be reached out to for possibilities of adoption or adaptation to help speed up resolving of local problems. One needs to address what or which of the two epistemology systems should be fused into which one.

Failure to address this aspect tends to create a situation where African systems may be exposed to domination given the stereotypical mentality that African epistemologies have no history worth talking about. Much of the IKS remain scarcely documented against historical colonial realities. The continent continues to seek a solution on how to incorporate indigenous languages, for instance, in various aspects of national operations such as in education, media, government, economics and so on as colonial languages continue to dominate business and government work.

The colonial past of the African continent, its long history, ravaging of its epistemologies and stereotyping practices have resulted in a heavily battered IKS &I in Africa (Cavino, 2013). It follows therefore that, MAE in matters of having to train local evaluators, knowledge development and packaging of evaluation should be part of this fundamental. This knowledge must be designed in such a way that the curriculum first challenges western epistemologies, critiques and exposes anomalies of what has already been propagated. This is a strategic way of deconstructing western epistemologies, theories and constructions on evaluation. In doing so, indigenous languages (Mpofu & Salawu, 2018) must have a place especially in matters of revoking IKS (Asakitikpi, 2020). Ultimately, it should be known that the exercise is as ideological as it is technical. In other words, western evaluation

practices and culture were institutionalized in Africa as such AfrEA, MAE or African governments need not be romantic in having to change the status quo but be robust in their approach while paying particular attention to detail.

Over the past few years, droughts in southern Africa have become recurrent, thus increasing vulnerability of the poor (Makhado et al., 2014). In response, regional governments and their development partners have been quick to roll out programmes designed to empower locals on managing drought, utilisation of modelled drought resistant seeds and food distribution (Nangombe, n.d.). An example is that of the Chivi and Zaka districts of Zimbabwe (south-east), where drought-induced challenges can be traced back to the colonial period. This means such communities have developed indigenous methods of coping with erratic rainfall periods. Most programmes pushed by donor agencies in such communities are however, intended to serve those pushed to the margins on the basis of various contextually dependent variables such as education, disabilities, socio-economic challenges, immigrant status, to mention a few. Inadequacies of Euro-western evaluations could be the reason why African governments over the years have grown to detest them, silently though, as evidenced by their under-utilisation or according to less political will. There is no doubt that:

dominant Euro-Western frameworks continue to evolve in a manner that primarily addresses the needs of donors and international agencies without sufficiently considering the realities of African beneficiaries (Mbava and Chapman, 2020 p4).

Under such circumstances, evaluation theories and approaches in order to have a standing they need to address the complexities that may characterise the context of operations. This is because such contexts may need their own unique solutions in order to support what Chillisa (2015), AfrEA (2017) and Mbava and Chapman (2020) call for. The African continent itself is not a homogenous village as it is too diverse in socio, political, economic and religious perspectives. African values and experiences in themselves are complex (Mertens & Musyoka, 2007)

and disregarding this seemingly 'simple' fact has serious implications in conversations of sustainable development. This is true, especially when one considers that evaluators have had a tendency of entering 'each context with a set of preconceived assumptions that guide their decisions about what variables are important to consider and how and from whom the data will be collected' (Mertens & Musyoka, 2007 p.5). Africa, through its various situations demands attention in its own right, in order to significantly deal with an array of its complexities.

To place the aforesaid into perspective, review of selected programmes may come in handy from the region. Chinsamy and Koitsiwe, (2016) report on the Lekgophung Community Women Indigenous Vegetable Garden Project (North-West Province, South Africa). The project, at the time of the study, had only six of the 20 original members. The rest left citing unsustainability of the project as it had failed to alleviate poverty as initially envisioned. The challenge with this report is that, it approaches 'indigenous' project as projects initiated and run by indigenous people without external developmental agencies supporting it mostly in financial terms. Results are presented as appalling as if to suggest that any project that is initiated by local people to run their affairs is doomed to fail. The studied project indicates that only 6 of the 20 members were continuing with the project under difficult circumstances, and those who opted out are said to have done so because the project had failed to meet their expectations mainly regular income, yet they were not interviewed or engaged in the study to provide their voices. One reads a Eurocentric evaluation in this aspect.

The above pose aspects needing reconfigurations in as far as MAE is concerned. At what point is a project deemed indigenous? Is it indigenous with respect to its initiation, and running or should it be incorporating indigenous systems (in terms of knowledge and technologies) but foreign funded? It is not disputed that foreign funded projects have a degree of manipulation to. Asakitikpi, (2020) noted that African governments and institutions such as UN and WHO, have recently come to recognise and encourage adoption and use, for instance of African traditional medicines alongside orthodox systems; but this has only been accepted on paper as there are no budgets, training, and respective legal

frameworks to support indigenous systems. This reads in tandem with the Lekgophung Community Women Indigenous Vegetable Garden Project noted as having suffered due to the government of South Africa pulling out as there was practically no support outside the community.

Engaging indigenous people in formulating and evaluating interventions targeted towards them

An important aspect often ignored is the concept of ‘participation’ by indigenous people in project initiations, yet their indigenous knowledge is vital in shaping the project plan, conditions of its implementation and ultimately are the key players to provide necessary information during evaluations. Havemann (2009 p.2) defined ‘participation’ as the right to contribute to ‘the deliberations and decisions of decision-making bodies, in contrast to the mere opportunity to be consulted or to be an observer of proceedings at the behest of the state parties.’ Just as the human rights component was called upon to be fulfilled in climate change governance in accordance with declarations at the 1993 Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, a more or less similar dimension is required against project formulations, implementations and evaluations to which MAE approaches, and paradigms that somehow come to rest on aspects of human rights formations. It will then mean that projects will be legally bounded to human rights laws, and observance. This way indigenous people and their knowledge will be accorded agency such that there will be more participation guaranteed by evaluation rather than reducing evaluation to being a mere consultation exercise. This will also make MAE human rights-based where rights are proactively integrated into the designs, developmental and implementation of all projects since this impact or have outcomes that impact on indigenous people. In other words, MAE must be accorded ‘eyes’ to see and ‘teeth’ to bite (Cavino, 2013) in the form of MAE-based laws tied to human rights protocols.

The “elephant in the room” are indigenous people who are positioned to adopt a posture of prohibition with regard to nonindigenous evaluation paradigms and evaluator work in indigenous contexts.

When the conversation is engaged from an indigenous perspective, evaluator competency is not the primary focus; rather, it is evaluation being reframed as a performance of power within which lies the potential for the realization of indigenous sovereignty. Precisely, it is that line of thinking that draws one to the body of IKS to reconfigure it as evaluation in African, in this context, exposing western epistemologies regarding development, survival and existence.

Euro-western epistemologically influenced paradigms, reflect not only complexities in undertaking evaluations but draw one's attention to the ultimate knowledge and conclusions associated with it regarding projects and the targeted people. The bias must be that evaluation be accountable to indigenous people or communities to which they are undertaken not be accountable to funders of the projects whose support of a project might be for their own ends.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter has demonstrated that a gap exists in current approaches to MAE where IKS is not explicitly referred to in some of the scholarly arguments. Indigenous methods of data collection are however acknowledged in the works of scholars such as Chilisa and Mertens (2021). This is a good start for the fusion of MAE with IKS, but the paper also shows that there are several ways in which indigenous knowledge has been applied in dealing with developmental challenges, yet such innovations may not be documented due to lack of approaches to evaluation which pay attention to IKS.

The paper has discussed several approaches to embedding IKS in Made in Africa Evaluations. In sum, it recommends the following:

- Lead organisations such as AfreA and other VOPEs on the continent should promote contextualised evaluation theory. They need to heed a call by (Cavino, 2013 p.342) for 'the development and implementation of a distinctly [African] epistemology that includes theoretical, philosophical, and

methodological components generating a cohesive and diverse range of models and pedagogies

- Increased advocacy by African evaluators for a stewardship relationship between funders or principals and developmental agencies (agents) in order to address power dynamics in the evaluation landscape.
- Interventions should be premised on indigenous epistemologies. Part of doing this requires that evaluators should be empowered to work with indigenous languages especially in reporting in order to represent beneficiaries of the programmes as well as involve them in communication for development.
- Lastly, there is need to engage indigenous populations in formulating and evaluating interventions targeted towards them. This could be done also by mandating that evaluators be locals or those who can prove to be well engrossed with local value systems

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Chapter 6

Decolonising and Indigenising Evaluation Practice in Africa: Roadmap for Mainstreaming the Made in Africa Evaluation Approach

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ABSTRACT

Decolonisation is a concept that has taken on multiple layers since the end of colonisation and the onset of independence in the Global South. More than ever before, decolonialism, decoloniality and indigenisation have moved to the centre of intellectual inquiry across the broad spectrum of human activity: knowledge production, education, academic disciplines, professions, political life and economic organisation. The evaluation profession and fraternity has also been grappling with the idea of decolonising and indigenising its ontological, epistemological and methodological foundations, which are essentially rooted in the Global North development theory, practice and knowledge systems. This chapter provides recommendations on how to make the Made in Africa Evaluation (MAE) paradigm practical (applicable) for evaluators in Africa, based on decolonisation and indigenisation methodological prescriptions. The methodology used is qualitative by design, employing document analysis and the authors' observation on development and evaluation practice in Africa and globally. The emergent practice of evaluation is only experiencing decolonial scrutiny in the

21st century. In the African context, the MAE paradigm appears to be the continent's decolonisation and indigenisation project for the evaluation fraternity. Building an Afrocentric, decolonised and indigenous MAE paradigm and approach requires a coordinated effort on building scholarship on the topic of MAE approaches and methodologies. Once there is sufficient documentation of the MAE approach, it should become easier to advance Afrocentric evaluation as mainstream discourse alongside the more established and neoliberal development and evaluation discourse.

Keywords: decolonisation; decoloniality; development; evaluation; Made in Africa Evaluation (MAE); philosophy; ontology; epistemology; methodology.

INTRODUCTION

Decolonisation and indigenisation of evaluation may be viewed as the restructuring of evaluation power relations in the global construction of evaluation knowledge production. Most evaluation methods available today are rooted in the history, philosophies and culture of the Global North countries (Said 1993; Smith 1999). For instance, it is not uncommon for an evaluation to examine the outcomes of a particular development programme to adopt economic growth rates over time as the central outcome indicator on which to judge that programme's outcome. Such an outcome indicator is based on the dominant neoliberal ideology that equates development with economic growth. Decolonising entails a political and normative ethic and practice of resistance and intentional undoing, unlearning and dismantling unjust practices, assumptions and institutions – as well as persistent positive action to create and build alternative spaces, networks and ways of knowing that transcend the epicolonial inheritance (Kessi, Marks & Ramugondo 2020). Decolonisation of evaluation involves the restructuring of evaluation knowledge production, such that African people may actively participate in the construction of 'what is evaluated when it is evaluated, by whom, and with what methodologies' (Chilisa et al.

2016). This can be referred to as Afrocentric evaluation, and it therefore follows that the development and mainstreaming of these evaluation practices require African evaluators to embark on a journey of decolonising and indigenising monitoring and evaluation (M&E) knowledge production in Africa. This can be achieved by identifying and building Afrocentric means of knowledge generation and/or analysis and indigenous methods of collecting data. This indigenisation of research methodology requires the participation of local communities, making sure that both monitoring and evaluation measure in order to assess the success and shortcomings of development interventions as experienced by African communities and populations (Frehiwot 2019:23). This is critical to ensure that intervention designs and frameworks reflect the priorities and needs of the Africans.

This decolonisation and indigenisation process involves ensuring that the intervention causal mechanisms envisaged are fit for purpose and context, based on the advancement of social justice. The aim is to empower local communities and stakeholders to conceptualise and implement development interventions that are using results frameworks that are locally relevant and appropriate and which should then yield sustainable results. Often, the development models pursued in African contexts are based on external developmental values and results frameworks.

This chapter examines the symbiotic relationship between decolonisation of development discourse and the quest for Afrocentric and indigenised evaluation knowledge, theory and practice in Africa. The strategic objective of the chapter is to imagine and crystallise a clear, concise, and practical Afrocentric and indigenised evaluation practice that can measure and assess the genuine outcomes and impact of development interventions as experienced by African populations designated as ‘beneficiaries’ of such interventions. The article begins by describing the methodology and conceptual framework guiding this article. The second section of the chapter problematises the current state of development and evaluation practices in Africa and positions the Made in Africa Evaluation (MAE) paradigm as an Afrocentric approach to development and evaluation that proposes indigenous

evaluation and research methods that are context- responsive. To this effect, the article conceptualises a ‘paradigm’ and its salient features in the methodology and conceptual framework section, in order to provide a conceptual basis from which to position the MAE approach as a credible alternative to the established hegemony of the Global North evaluation theory and practice. The third section of the chapter examines the practicality, feasibility and viability of Afrocentric evaluation theory, practice and associated methodologies. Essentially, the section examines whether Afrocentric evaluation can possibly build sustainable and valuable Afrocentric evaluation systems that are able to inform relevant development planning, policy-making and implementation, which could induce better development outcomes and a decent life for African populations. The chapter concludes by highlighting the proposals on key Afrocentric and indigenous evaluation methods relevant and applicable in the African context and areas of future study regarding the interface between decolonisation, development and evaluation in Africa.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The chapter adopts document review and analysis as its primary research methodology. Document analysis is a form of qualitative research in which documents are interpreted by the researcher to give voice and meaning around an assessment topic (Bowen 2009). Observation and experience of development and the evaluation field in Africa is a secondary methodology that the authors adopt when addressing the interface between the dominant Global North evaluation discourse and approaches relative to the emerging MAE paradigm. Observation is a research methodology whereby a researcher watches the behaviour, events or characteristics of a particular phenomenon in a certain setting. Observation can be either overt (the observed being aware that they are under scrutiny) or covert, whereby the observed are unaware that they are under surveillance (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2018). The authors’ tacit knowledge and observation of

development and the evaluation field in Africa are based on their experience in evaluation capacity development (ECD) across anglophone African countries, including but not limited to East and Southern Africa. Moreover, the authors have participated in various knowledge sharing platforms reflecting on evaluation practice in Africa and globally, such as national, sub-regional, regional, cross-continental and global conferences and webinars.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF KEY VARIABLES OF THE CHAPTER

This conceptual framework gives an account of key variables of interest in this chapter, inclusive of the concepts *evaluation*, *knowledge system*, *decolonisation*, *afrocentricity* as countermeasure to coloniality, and *paradigm*. *Evaluation* is commonly defined as the systematic and objective assessment of an on-going or completed project, program or policy. This assessment (i.e. the evaluation) either examines the design, implementation or results achieved by a development intervention. The ultimate aim of an evaluation is to determine the relevance and fulfilment of the objectives, the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the intervention, as well as its coherence with like-minded interventions within a given context, and sustainability of the intervention and change it contributed to. Of course, the type of evaluation commissioned and undertaken will determine which of the above aims (i.e. relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and/or coherence) are pursued by the evaluation. An evaluation should provide information that is credible and useful, enabling an organisation to use lessons learned to inform decision-making regarding the project/policy (regarding design, resource allocation and implementation). Evaluation provides evidence regarding why policy/programme outputs, targets and outcomes are or are not being achieved. The primary function of evaluation is therefore to determine *causality*, or how the intervention has achieved or not achieved its outcomes and impact - intended medium-term goals and long-term change (Kusek and Rist, 2004; International Federation of

the Red Cross and Crescent, 2011). Having explained evaluation as a concept and key subject of inquiry to be decolonised (i.e. the dependent variable of this chapter), the subsequent concepts to be explained are the independent variables that will affect the extent to which evaluation in Africa takes on more African characteristics (norms, principles and socio-economic and political areas of inquiry).

Before explaining what a *knowledge system* is, it is important to clarify what a *system* is. Jackson (2018) defines a system as any entity, conceptual or physical, which consists of interdependent parts. Importantly, all these interdependent parts need to work together for the system to function optimally. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (2020) defines a *knowledge system* as an organised structure and dynamic process of generating knowledge about phenomena that has origins in a particular place or context, and it is reinforced by logical relationships that enable the evolution, revision, adaptation and advancement of knowledge. Mainstream evaluation and the proposed MAE approach are policy and programme performance appraisal mechanisms that rely on knowledge systems in order to assess and pass judgement on the performance, merit and wealth of a particular development intervention.

Oliver (2019:1) defines ‘decolonisation’ as the process of appropriating all sources of knowledge (i.e. knowledge systems) for the purpose of achieving epistemic recognition for previously unacknowledged and/or suppressed knowledge sources. At the heart of decolonisation is the objective of inclusivity of all knowledge sources without geographical, racial, gender or cultural bias (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018:18). Decolonisation is a dynamic concept that describes two interrelated phenomena. Firstly, decolonisation can refer to the 20th century political process whereby former African colonies gained independence from the European states. This historical process of decolonisation was characterised by the new states adopting new constitutions, forming new national symbols such as flags and joining the United Nations as new members of the international society of sovereign nation-states.

The second meaning of decolonisation refers to the postcolonial discourse and concomitant movement to eliminate various forms of

colonial influence and legacies in the newly African independent states and perhaps other former colonies across the Global South (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018:18). Decolonisation is therefore a political and normative practice of dismantling unjust practices, assumptions and institutions (Kessi, Marks & Ramugondo 2020). While the first description of decolonisation focuses on the process of political independence, the second conceptualisation of decolonisation is more substantive by advocating for a transformative process of liberating Africa and the rest of the Global South from the economic, social and cultural aspects of European colonisation (von Bismarck 2012:1). Ndlovu- Gatsheni (2018:18) argues that political decolonisation was essentially the first phase of decolonisation and is being followed by the process of eradicating the colonial legacy of European economic, social (including epistemic) and cultural domination in Africa and elsewhere in the Global South. This second phase and process of decolonisation is important for the article as it is applicable to MAE's mission of advocating for the epistemic transformation of evaluation in Africa.

From the above conceptualisation, one derives an understanding of decolonisation as referring to the eradication of European epistemic, political, economic, social, cultural and linguistic domination worldwide. An important caveat is that the complete reversal of centuries of European colonisation is a difficult, if not impossible, task given the highly globalised and interdependent nature of the world in the 21st century. For instance, the linguistic dominance of English and French in anglophone and francophone Africa, respectively, is a by-product of colonialism and eradicating these adopted linguistic mediums of communication domestically and internationally seems impossible. Von Bismarck (2012:2) therefore argues that any decolonial discourse that suggests the complete reversal of colonialism, which occurred over 500 years in the Global South, is an extreme discourse.

Decolonisation is at times conflated with the concept of 'indigenisation'. Indigenisation is the practice of knowledge creation through using native (local or indigenous) knowledge systems, training and resources. Indigenisation emerged as a response to the growing recognition of the limitations of Western models of research, education

and practice in certain contexts. The foundations of indigenisation are in the social work profession, where social work scholars sought to create social work knowledge based on local cultures, behaviours and practices. The aim of indigenising social work was to make the practice locally relevant so that it could address culturally relevant and context-specific problems, which Western-centric social work could not do (Gray & Coates 2010:615). Applied to the context of evaluation practice, indigenisation can be seen as the normative act of adopting contextually and culturally responsive evaluation methodologies and approaches, ensuring that the evaluation process is amenable to the context within which the development intervention being evaluated is based. From this conceptualisation, indigenisation is another 'operationalisation tool' to realise the objectives of decolonisation, similar to Afrocentricity.

'Afrocentricity' is a concept associated with decolonisation and proposes that black people ought to make sense of matters from an African perspective and promote African knowledge systems. Through this Afrocentric paradigm, Africans shall see themselves as agents, actors and participants in knowledge production and general world affairs. Afrocentricity is therefore an activity and attitude meant to eradicate the marginalisation of Africans from political and economic experiences (Chawane 2016:78). Afrocentricity therefore operationalises decolonisation and its normative prescriptions, ensuring that Africans are at the centre of knowledge production, political events and economic activity.

Given the chapter's quest to position MAE as a mainstream evaluation 'paradigm', it is prudent to define what constitutes a 'paradigm'. The term 'paradigm' is said to have been popularised by Thomas Kuhn in his seminal book titled 'The Structure of Scientific Revolutions' of 1962. Kuhn (1962:10) defined a paradigm as a scientific revolution or a new scientific way of doing research that is unprecedented and attracts new supporters to adopt this new way of conducting scientific research and to abandon existing research traditions. Kuhn therefore implied that a paradigm introduces new traditions and methods of conducting scientific research. A paradigm can therefore be viewed as a guide that structures how scientific research should be conducted, and every

scientific discipline or field of study has a particular research paradigm. Denzin and Lincoln (2005:183) further postulate that a paradigm is associated with four concepts that guide how research is conducted: ontology, epistemology, ethics and methodology. 'Ontology' refers to the study of the nature of reality (phenomena) and human beings in the world (Levers 2013:2). For instance, a materialist ontologist believes that all that is real is physical and does not believe in the existence of ghosts and similar supernatural beings (Willis 2007:9). 'Epistemology' essentially refers to what can be known about reality (knowledge) and how it can be known. Epistemology asks the questions such as what knowledge is and how knowledge can be acquired (Willis 2007:10). In the social sciences, knowledge is acquired through qualitative and quantitative research methods. *Made in Africa Evaluation* is an epistemological and intellectual activity that seeks to mainstream Afrocentric and indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) as part of its broader sources of information when investigating the outcomes and impact of a public policy, project or programme.

Ethics is an additional concept that is central to a paradigm, and it essentially refers to the moral code of conduct that should be followed by researchers when conducting research (Denzin & Lincoln 2005:183). Methodology is the fourth tenet of a paradigm, generally referring to a variety of research methods adopted by a particular discipline for the purpose of building or acquiring new knowledge in a particular field (Denzin & Lincoln 2005:183).

The chapter's extensive explication of a paradigm in the social sciences provides a conceptual framework from which to position the MAE approach as a credible alternative to the established hegemony of Global North evaluation theory and practice. Evaluation is a practice that makes use of qualitative and quantitative research methodologies as part of its effort to assess the performance of development interventions. Given this intricate relationship between evaluation and research, it therefore follows that MAE is an emerging paradigm whose research methods ought to display the characteristics of a new paradigm. The section with the heading 'decolonisation in evaluation discourse and practice' addresses what MAE's paradigm entails.

THE MEANING OF ‘DECOLONISATION’ IN DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION DISCOURSE

Before venturing into a meaningful process of decolonising evaluation practice, there is a need to understand what decolonisation means in the broader context of development discourse and theory from which the evaluation field emerged. Development theory and practice is often criticised by decolonisation scholars as being dominated by Western scholarship and practice (Chilisa et al. 2016). For example, the continued post-1980s dominance of neoliberal development policy prescriptions seeking to improve economies and living conditions worldwide, as proposed by Western governments (such as the United Kingdom [UK] and the United States of America [USA]) and the Bretton Woods institutions (the World Bank and International Monetary Fund), has not led to meaningful socio-economic development in African countries (Caffentzis 2002:90). The dominance of Western thinking in Africa is further demonstrated by the popularity of New Public Management (NPM) governance approaches which originate from the USA, Canada, the UK and New Zealand (Gelas 2014). New Public Management emphasises the achievement of efficiency and effectiveness of development efforts through private sector-led growth and cutbacks on social security safety nets and subsidisation of many services by the state. Both neoliberalism and NPM failed due to being premised on foreign development policy and governance models that were not context-fit. Essentially, NPM as an ideology influenced the direction, methods and measures of national development and critical implications for the abandonment of local and diverse contextual considerations: the historical, political and social as well as the necessary development models and agenda required for Africa’s development as conceived by its governments and citizens. These ideologies continue to influence development programme design that in turn influences the evaluation methodologies and approaches used to assess development interventions.

Alternatively, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013:4) advocates for Afrocentric and decolonised development theory and practice that deviates from the dominant Global North development theories such as modernisation

theory, which presuppose African countries should be in the process of becoming modern rational entities in which efficiency and scientific logic replace traditional values and belief systems (Martin 2009). This alternative Afrocentric development discourse is essential given the failures of Global North theories of development and neoliberal policies that promised linear paths to development. For instance, colonisation, neocolonialism (former colonial powers retaining their economic and political influence in former colonies) and the neoliberal Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) instituted by multilateral financial institutions of the Liberal International Order (LIO) all failed to bring about the industrialisation, development, civilisation and modernity they had promised to deliver to African populations (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013:1–2).

Decolonisation scholars propose an alternative development discourse and practice in Africa that is rooted in the developmental values as defined by African citizens and communities, drawing on collectively defined development indicators at the local (community) level (Du Toit 2018:26; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013:4). This requires reframing power imbalances in the planning, design and implementation of development interventions, noting that much of development funding and expertise is derived from the Global North; therefore, it is crucial in the process of decolonising African development thinking, discourse and practice. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013:4) emphasises the need to encourage and build strong Afrocentric and Global South scholarship that defines development from Global South perspectives, values and culture.

Thus, decolonised development discourse and practice should primarily emerge and be sustained by epistemological bases of Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean – which are Global South geopolitical regions that experienced colonialism. Within Africa, decolonial scholarship on development is to be rooted in African knowledge generation systems (IKSs), and it must ensure that Afrocentric development theories and paradigms become mainstreamed in the global knowledge economy, rather than peripheral. According to Tavernaro-Haidarian (2019:19), a decolonised perspective

of development is rooted in the moral philosophy of *ubuntu*, which conceptualises 'development' as a process of 'mutual empowerment'. Put simply, development from a decolonisation perspective refers to any intervention which 'enables people and societies, individual and communities, to realise their full material, social and spiritual potential' (Tavernaro-Haidarian 2019:22). It is therefore evident that Afrocentric development theory and practice requires a move away from neoliberal ideology as the underlying and primary foundation of development planning and policymaking. This is because neoliberal development approaches to development are premised on capitalist imperatives (i.e. economic deregulation, privatisation and minimal government interference) that pursue the interests of the elite who control the means of production at the expense of other groups and the environment (Tavernaro-Haidarian 2019:20).

The decolonised alternative model of development discourse and practice described above logically requires the active participation and buy-in of citizens, governments, community-based organisations (CBOs), nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) and development partners (bilateral and multilateral donors) who occupy the development landscape in Africa. Without the cooperation, buy-in and participation of these development stakeholders, this alternative Afrocentric development paradigm will remain a philosophical endeavour lacking in implementation. Ethnography, collaborative diagnosis of prevailing socio-economic issues by an intervening party and affected individuals and communities is one of key methodologies of a decolonised approach to creating pathways for development or socio-economic change and advancement. This co-mapping of lived experiences is followed by community-generated interventions seeking to ameliorate the identified socio-economic challenges facing said community (Tavernaro-Haidarian 2019:20). It is therefore discernible that a decolonised approach to development involves the adoption of relational, community-driven mapping of development solutions which place affected communities and individuals at the centre of designing development interventions, working side-by-side with development 'experts'.

MADE IN AFRICA EVALUATION AS THE VEHICLE OF DECOLONISING EVALUATION DISCOURSE AND PRACTICE IN AFRICA

The Made in Africa (MAE) discourse has been on the African evaluation agenda for over a decade, with the backing of the African Evaluation Association (AfrEA) and ECD stakeholders. It is one of the initiatives meant to promote high quality evaluation led by, and rooted in Africa, including evaluation theory (i.e. ontology) and practice that is culturally relevant and responsive to African contexts and needs (Chilisa 2015). Frehiwot (2019:22) and Chilisa (2015:8) argue that in order to advance MAE practice and paradigm, there is a need for African evaluation practitioners to establish and advocate for an evaluation practice that is based on African developmental values (e.g. ubuntu, self-determination, human welfare, cultural preservation, communal prosperity and well-being). Furthermore, MAE ought to promote the adaptation of evaluation tools, instruments and strategies and harness evaluation and research methodologies emanating from or complementary to local cultures and IKSs. Moreover, Afrocentric evaluation practice ought to be cognisant, relevant and responsive to Africa's nuanced political, economic and social conditions and systems (i.e. developing and underdeveloped states, stable, fragile, conflict and post- conflict states).

Given Africa's colonial history, it is imperative that the deconstruction of Global North M&E approaches is complemented by a process of constructing Afrocentric M&E approaches, methodologies and practice that emphasise developmental indicators such as social justice, equity (equal opportunities to education and other factors that enable one to attain upward social mobility) and the empowerment of vulnerable social groups such as women, children, youth and people living with disabilities. Current evaluation methods and approaches are failing to capture the context, cultural and values nuanced in-depth understanding of these issues; hence, MAE can assist with such.

Likewise, Afrocentric evaluation practice should promote African IKSs and the use of indigenous (local) languages as a means of collecting M&E data, such as with storytelling (Frehiwot 2019:24). Furthermore, given the historical and colonial context of extraction in Africa, data sovereignty and community-based data governance mechanisms in terms of ownership, representation and utility are important. Such a shift recognises the need for communities to use their data for their own development, and it has become critically important in the discussion on the use of indigenous methodologies in the Global South (LaFrance & Nichols 2008; Walter & Suina 2018). The promotion of use of IKSs has created critical discourse on how communities should govern the collection, ownership and application of data about local communities, people, land and resources. This discourse requires evaluators to rethink the power dynamics in the use and generation of evidence involving local communities in Africa, particularly in tackling complex development problems and should be built into Afrocentric evaluation practice, guiding principles and frameworks.

This process of constructing Afrocentric evaluation practice necessitates the use of participatory methods that ensure inclusion and participation of target beneficiaries (communities and populations) during the processes of conceptualising 'development', development indicators and the development of M&E frameworks that measure the performance of, and outcomes effected by development interventions. Made in Africa Evaluation tools can be used to uncover the historical events, unjust systems and structures, belief systems and values that continue to be inherent in the Africa contexts. In particular, the development and enactment of national M&E policies that prescribe the aforementioned Afrocentric evaluation practice would provide a favourable guiding framework that further enables the decolonisation of African evaluation practice (Chilisa 2015:14). The aim of these decolonisation endeavours is to incrementally build Afrocentric M&E systems that provide valuable inputs into governance and development processes such as development planning, policymaking, budgeting and general government decision-making. The logic behind the development of M&E frameworks that prioritise African developmental

indicators and intended outcomes and impacts is born out of the fact that M&E frameworks (i.e. M&E policies, plans and guidelines) are key pillars of a typical M&E system (Chirau et al. 2020:2; Goldman 2018:2).

Frehiwot (2019:22) asserts that M&E practice in Africa is a microcosm of the asymmetric power relations of the Global North and Global South, which is a key feature of the post- 1945 global political economy. Africa's consumption of Global North M&E epistemologies and know-how is a symptom of a wider global political economy phenomenon where knowledge production is still somewhat concentrated in Global North countries in North America and Western Europe (Balaam & Dillman 2014:16). This is the global knowledge structure and system within which Global North M&E methods, approaches and practices thrive and are exported to the Global South – a phenomenon from which Africa is not insulated.

There is a North–South power imbalance that is characterised by the dominance of Global North knowledge systems and practices at the expense of Global South knowledge systems and practices. Monitoring and evaluation practice in Africa is currently based on Global North development theory, values, culture and neoliberal ideology. Chilisa (2015:13) asserts that the current Global North evaluation methods and approaches are ill-equipped to inform development planning as a result of adopting development indicators that are not aligned to the development context, values and aspirations of the populations they purport to benefit. It therefore follows that the evaluation field reflects and perpetuates this North–South neocolonial relationship, because Global North M&E theories, models, methods, practices and approaches dominate the African M&E epistemic and professional landscape at the expense of authentic African performance appraisal methods that tap into indigenous epistemologies and practices.

Decolonisation in the context of evaluation practice means restructuring of power relations in the global production of evaluation knowledge and methodology, such that the African people may actively participate in the construction of 'what is evaluated, when it is evaluated, by whom, and with what methodologies' (Chilisa et al. 2016). It therefore follows that the development and mainstreaming of authentic

Afrocentric evaluation practice requires African evaluators to embark on a journey of decolonising M&E in Africa ontologically and epistemologically. This can be achieved by mainstreaming participatory and grassroots methodology such as ethnography, Most Significant Change (MSC) and participatory rural appraisal tools as well as story-telling, participatory narrative inquiry and sense-making, which seek to gain deeper understanding into context and beneficiary experiences, past and future priorities and needs. These are participatory and localised evaluation techniques that ought to be advanced by MAE scholars and advocates, as they offer opportunities to utilise indigenous knowledge and capture the views of native communities within which the programme being evaluated is based.

Given that Africa's prevailing context is one of stable, fragile and post-conflict states, it is important that evaluation methodologies are cognisant and appropriate for these contexts, and such contexts necessitate innovation. Likewise, Africa is culturally and ethnically diverse, which are further considerations for the data collection or research design of evaluation undertakings. For instance, when collecting data to measure the performance of development interventions in countries experiencing conflict, an MAE approach to evaluations can harness technological inventions of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) such as satellite images and other forms of geospatial data of the area in which a development intervention is or was implemented. Furthermore, mobile phones can also capture video testimonials by intended beneficiaries as part of evaluation data collection methodologies. This would empower intended development beneficiaries in the conflict-torn country to share their experiences of the development intervention and their own developmental aspirations (World Bank 2020:Online). However, such data collection methodology must be consistent with necessary data governance mechanisms and policies that need to be established to ensure that data is used ethically and responsibly to evade extractive and exploitative actions.

The decolonisation of research methodology for evaluation therefore requires reframing power dynamics and the participation of local communities, making sure that both M&E measure and assess

the success and shortcomings of development interventions as experienced by African communities and populations (Frehiwot 2019:23). When such methodologies are handicapped by conflict and other disruptions, innovative technologies of the 4IR can address participatory limitations through remote capturing of lived experiences.

Chilisa et al. (2016) asserts that decolonisation of development and evaluation requires African resistance to the blind borrowing of Western developmental values and standards to evaluate programmes in Africa. Likewise, African policy analysts, researchers and evaluators must have capacity to understand Africa's varied development experiences and prevailing socio-economic conditions to enable them to carry out their own context-relevant evaluations and promote the adaptation of evaluation tools, instruments, strategies, theories and models that are relevant to African settings. In essence, the onus is on African development and evaluation practitioners, actors and institutions to adopt the participatory data collection methodologies mentioned in this section of the article, which recognise and illuminate local cultures, IKSs, African philosophies and African conceptualisation of what development is. Made in Africa Evaluation is a paradigm shift that has potential to produce accurate evidence that informs responsive and better policies, programmes and projects that are responsive to Africa's diverse socio-political and economic conditions (i.e. conflict, post-conflict, fragile and stable states).

IS DECLONONISING EVALUATION THINKING AND PRACTICE A FEASIBLE OBJECTIVE OR UTOPIAN IDEA?

Using the conceptual framework of what constitutes a paradigm (see section methodological approach of the article), decolonising evaluation in Africa is a feasible process which requires the buy-in of evaluators, scholars, governments, nonprofit organisations and NGOs as commissioners of evaluations. Johnston-Goodstar (2012) states that evaluations are situated in the context of a specific place, time, community

and history. This implies that evaluation methods and approaches are adaptable and can be modified to be relevant to a specific country or location. In the African context, this implies that there is a need to adapt new evaluation approaches, methods and criteria to be amenable to the diverse socio-economic, cultural, political and security contexts throughout the continent. A relational and context-based approach to programme evaluations requires an understanding of diverse African locations, security contexts and cultures (ways of life and knowing) and to collect programme information based on programme beneficiaries' subjective experiences and values vis-à-vis a particular development intervention (Chilisa et al. 2016).

Evaluators who adopt an MAE perspective should be required to develop and adopt localised data collection methodologies (e.g. ethnography, story-telling, folklore, MSC, participatory narrative inquiry and sense-making) that capture and seek meanings behind subjective individual and collective experiences of target beneficiaries that result from the implementation of a particular development intervention undergoing evaluation. Such evaluation methodologies are to be further determined by factors such as whether the development intervention is implemented in a conflict, post- conflict, fragile or stable macro-environment, and they should be culturally appropriate. Below are concrete recommendations and a roadmap to facilitate the mainstreaming of MAE as an Afrocentric approach to commissioning, undertaking and using evaluation in governance and development practice.

The role of higher education institutions in decolonising evaluation

Decolonisation and indigenisation of evaluation can be achieved further by decolonising the education curriculum. African education systems retain the colonial influence of the Global North countries to date. Tertiary institutions have a critical role to play to develop evaluation curricula that enable this shift, with the acknowledgement that much of the evaluation education and training remains donor-driven

and developed in the Global North (Tirivanhu et al. 2018). While postgraduate and short course evaluation training offerings on MAE are available in South Africa – namely, Development Evaluation Training in Africa (DETA), which is in abeyance since 2022, offered by the Centre for Learning on Evaluations and Results-Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA) at the University of Witwatersrand, and the on-going Master of Philosophy (MPhil) in M&E offered by the Centre for Research on Evaluation, Science and Technology (CREST) in the University of Stellenbosch – these universities are still grappling with defining and finding space for the MAE paradigm. However, to date there is still a dearth of research outputs, particularly postgraduate theses or dissertations on the MAE subject. Furthermore, the availability of these courses is not widespread in the African continent, limiting MAE's reach and enhancement of individual and community development experiences and interpretations in various local and regional contexts in Africa.

Decolonisation and indigenisation of evaluation curricula require coordinated advocacy and promotion by African researchers and evaluators in the pursuit of development from a social justice perspective. Likewise, universities should incorporate decolonised evaluation approaches and methods into M&E curricula offerings in Africa at undergraduate or postgraduate levels. This will ensure that the Afrocentric evaluation paradigm becomes a part of mainstream evaluation discourse across Africa. Of importance is to develop a critical mass of evaluators who integrate MAE throughout the cycle of programme evaluations and to shape the development of theories of change and logic models of development interventions. The M&E curricula of higher education institutions (HEIs) should therefore include Afrocentric evaluation approaches and methodologies.

The role of African evaluators

Simultaneously, as recognition and advocacy for professionalisation of evaluation advance to enhance the requisite competencies, standards and guidelines for evaluation practice in Africa have been developed by the Africa Evaluation Association (Chirau et al. 2018).

The development of African evaluators should contribute to filling the need for practitioners who will decolonise and indigenise evaluation practice in pursuit of MAE. In adopting the MAE perspective and paradigm, African evaluators should ensure that evaluation criteria are free from blind following of Global North development narratives, logics, theories, indicators and ideologies. Presently, in terms of the practice of MAE, there is still a dearth in knowledge dissemination of practical MAE case studies, particularly in peer-reviewed journals and books. Therefore, African evaluators and researchers should document emerging Afrocentric evaluation methods in peer-reviewed journals and books so that researchers, students and the broader international evaluation community can have access to these decolonised evaluation methods and emerging knowledge.

For this, practical entry points for MAE practice must be identified in the practice of evaluation. While most of the current developments in MAE focus primarily on the definition or intellectual conceptualisation of the approach, there is a need to think of evaluability assessments as an additional entry point for MAE. The practice of developing evaluability assessments, both in principle and in practice, conducted from a social justice perspective, is a critical step for the advancement of MAE for more meaningful, more responsive and appropriate evaluations. This is especially the case for more complex development interventions to deepen understanding of what works and how, where, for whom and in what conditions, in conjunction with the technical and political considerations in evaluative aspirations. This thereby ensures that the values of communities are incorporated into the design of development interventions to be evaluated and that the causal mechanisms of development interventions are strengthened through targeted capacity-building where necessary. Furthermore, this inquiry opens up opportunity for the development of M&E frameworks with the participation of beneficiaries and local stakeholders, who should help plan, implement, monitor and evaluate development interventions.

***The role of Commissioners of evaluation
and involving local community members***

Another means of decolonising and indigenising evaluations is to involve community members in the design and implementation of the evaluations, not as participants but decision-makers and partners who have a voice through the conduct of evaluability assessments, evaluation planning and implementation as well as the findings dissemination processes. This includes developing innovative and inclusive processes to ensure that communities' values, priorities and needs are encompassed in all decision-making processes. Community engagement and involvement should be genuinely open to all regardless of gender, sexual orientation, religion and age, in order to eliminate the exclusion of certain individuals in the community. Made in Africa Evaluation scholars and practitioners should always remember that African communities are heterogeneous spaces where different social groups experience development in different ways, while also leveraging disproportionate influence over the development agenda of the community due to cultural and other historical dynamics. Thus, any inclusive and participatory evaluation should make use of data collection methodology that will capture the lived development experiences of all such social groupings when undertaking an evaluation of a particular development intervention and its effect in such communities. Johnston-Goodstar (2012) urges evaluators to use evaluation advisory groups known as Community Advisory Groups in literature on indigenous research and evaluations. These groups should include community leaders, structures and stakeholders who are important in assisting in the creation of research methods informed by local ways of doing and knowing which are applicable and relevant to the developmental needs of the communities in Africa. This will help evaluators avoid what Chilisa et al. (2016) label as 'least indigenised' approaches, where evaluation only involves local communities when it comes to the translation of questionnaires and consent forms.

The MAE paradigm is aligned to the United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda notion of 'leaving no one behind' in the pursuit

of development. If MAE proves its worth, M&E should generate empirical knowledge about ‘what works and why’ in the African context. More importantly, due to the non-homogeneity of African contexts, the question of what works, where and for whom is critical. An Afrocentric evaluation approach will contribute to the generation of an evidence base of African solutions to African problems. Participatory approaches to conducting research and evaluation through the inclusion of communities have the potential of generating new approaches, methods and inducing social change outcomes that are meaningful (Chilisa, Major & Khudu-Petersen 2017; Frehiwot 2019). Participatory and inclusive evaluation and research approaches need to be facilitated by experienced evaluators where the environment may not be conducive for the participation of all due to local politics, religious beliefs, ethnic conflicts and cultural beliefs limiting who participates, levels of participation and form of participation. Moreover, context-conscious participatory approaches to research and evaluation have the potential to contribute to envisioning a nuanced evaluation practice in Africa, integrating both the Global North and IKSs.

Government-led M&E processes at local levels can contribute towards the construction and maintenance of Afrocentric evaluation ecosystems. Local governments are well positioned to contribute to the MAE agenda because they are close to citizens and communities. Monitoring and evaluation is a critical development tool that needs to be supported by municipal political and administrative leadership to ensure that it functions optimally by offering citizen-responsive services. Uganda, Ghana and South Africa have experimented with the use of citizen-based monitoring at community level as one way of engaging citizens at the local level, serving as a feedback loop between government and communities, primarily on matters relating to service delivery (Smith et al. 2020; Watera 2019). Citizen-based monitoring is an approach to monitoring government performance that focuses on the experiences of ordinary citizens to strengthen public accountability and drive service delivery improvements. Citizen-based monitoring can be augmented to include an evaluation component, which would take advantage of the existing CBM structures.

The Ghana case demonstrates strengthened evidence use in assessing sanitation performance at the local level as a result of the involvement of two civil society organisations, mainly NGOs, working with communities and government at the district level, helping to refine and improve the quality of indicators used to monitor district level performance in the sanitation sector (Smith et al. 2020). This grassroots community based monitoring example can be used as a blueprint and building block for establishing a community-level evaluative culture through engaging communities in the planning, design and undertaking of evaluations with local communities. Post-evaluation, communities could be positioned as co-creators of evaluation evidence-use mechanisms (i.e. the co-development of improvement plans), which communities would then monitor to ensure project or programme staff make use of evaluative findings. In South African local government, key legislation has established formal public participation forums exist, especially in local government for Integrated Development Plan (IDP) formulation and reporting, however, citizen voices tend not to be significant. Kitching and van Donk (2015) assert that inability of public institutions to uphold their responsibility to be vertically accountable for policy/service delivery performance necessitates the strengthening of community-based monitoring. Community-Based Monitoring (CBM) is a mechanism(s) which allows citizens to determine development priorities and the indicators for measuring local government's development performance and to demand action when their (reasonable) expectations are not met. Key legislation that promotes CBM in South African local government includes:

- I. Section 153 of the Constitution (1996) sets out the objectives of local government, which include providing democratic and accountable governance, providing basic services, promoting social and economic development, promoting safe and healthy environments;
- II. *Constitution of 1996 (section 152 [e])* promotes involvement of communities and community organisations in local government

- (and encouraging community involvement in the matters of local governance: planning, budgeting, implementation);
- III. *Local Government Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000* (amended 2011) encourages the involvement of the local community and makes community engagement in IDP development mandatory at the local level.
 - IV. *Local Government White Paper* (1998: 6) echoes the Constitution, stating that local government in the country should be developmental in nature and should, therefore, be 'committed to working with citizens and groups within the community to find sustainable ways to meet their social, economic and material needs and improve the quality of their lives'.

There is, however, a long way to go to transform these community accountability structures and to implement CBM legislation, because they have limited civil society organisations engagement and are handicapped by political office bearers who do not engage them sufficiently and consistently, and the issue of low public participation is also a problem. The inadequate delivery of basic services has placed significant strain on the relationship between local governments and their constituents, and has resulted in growing antagonism and animosity (Kitching and van Donk, 2015). Between January and June 2024, 122 service delivery protests took place in South Africa (Cowling, 2024). Service delivery protests are the highest form of community-based evaluation, an indication that service delivery outcomes are bad (i.e. people are not receiving basic services such as water, sanitation, refuse removal etc.).

Therefore, there is a great need to develop local level evaluation practice that will gradually morph into local-level evaluation ecosystems that build an Afrocentric and community-driven evaluation practice that improves service delivery and development outcomes. Moreover, the development of CBM and evaluation infrastructure through the development of community-level evaluation guidelines, frameworks and subnational policies is important to guide the practice

of context-relevant M&E. The decentralisation of the M&E function to the community level is essential if citizens will have a voice in the M&E of programme outputs, outcomes and impact, and general service delivery. The ultimate aim of developing and advocating for Afrocentric evaluation is to give greater agency to development beneficiaries (regardless of spatial location) to take part in the appraisal of development interventions and the degree to which such interventions are responsive to their needs.

***The role of indigenous knowledge systems
in the Made in Africa Evaluation Paradigm***

Decolonisation and indigenisation of evaluation systems can also be achieved by creating evaluation models based on IKSs. The creation of evaluation models based on IKS can include the African Proverbs-based approach suggested by Easton (2012). Proverbs tend to seek causal factors of phenomena, beneath obvious appearances (Easton, 2012). This makes African proverbs to be inherently evaluative given that they are driven by the urge to understand causality of phenomena. Indigenous knowledge systems are complex set of knowledge, skills and technologies existing and developed by populations and communities indigenous to a particular geographic area. It encompasses technological, social, economic, philosophical, learning and governance systems. Most African governments are committed to mainstreaming and digital preservation of IKS to advancing its use and scientific competitive advantage. For example, the South African government approved the IKSs policy (2004), whose overarching objective is to enable the recognition, affirmation, promotion, protection and development of indigenous knowledge in South Africa. The policy addresses the elements of indigenous knowledge that are not accommodated in the National Qualification Framework (NQF) and helps to explore existing opportunities for the accreditation and certification of indigenous knowledge holders in the current NQF. In the same fashion, IKS should be documented and integrated into the existing curriculum, not only at universities but also in high schools.

To realise the MAE practice and paradigm, evaluators ought to tap into the relational and context-relevant value of IKS, using indigenous knowledge to accurately appraise development from the perspective of indigenous populations and their subjective meanings of development. Indigenous African education is slowly being integrated into the national education curriculum in Zimbabwe. By complementing the core curriculum from teaching and learning based on Western science and teaching and learning based on it is anticipated that all forms of knowledge, ways of knowing and worldviews will be equally acknowledged (Tanyanyiwa 2019).

CONCLUSION

Developing the MAE paradigm remains a feasible mission that requires the coordinated efforts of African evaluation practitioners, scholars, government, communities and nongovernmental development stakeholders. The article finds a symbiotic relationship between development theory, ideology and practice, and the evaluation function. It therefore follows that building an Afrocentric, decolonised and indigenous MAE paradigm and approach requires a coordinated effort on building scholarship on the topic of MAE approaches and methodologies. Once there is sufficient documentation of the MAE approach, it should become easier to advance Afrocentric evaluation as mainstream discourse alongside the more established and neoliberal development and evaluation discourses. Key areas of consideration regarding MAE should include how to champion and lobby support for Afrocentric evaluation practice among development and evaluation practitioners, stakeholders and scholars. A related area of focus is how to solidify MAE as a branch of decolonisation theory, and assigning it to African evaluation scholars, evaluators, researchers and others who believe in, or benefit from, the utility of the Afrocentric approach to evaluation.

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Chapter 7

Towards Defining and Advancing “Made in Africa Evaluation”

*Oladayo Omosa, Thomas Archibald, Kim Neiwolny,
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INTRODUCTION

African researchers and policy analysts played a critical role in resisting colonial rule and policies. They did this by providing a different focus and judgment of the impacts of Western powers on African developmental efforts, especially concerning the history of the evaluation of “structural adjustments” policies (Cloete, 2016; Mouton, Rabie, De Coning, & Cloete 2014).

A review of the current status of evaluation in Africa shows that it is still primarily commissioned by international and development agencies that are primarily non-African stakeholders in evaluation (Ofir, 2014). Based on this, local evaluators in Africa have to compete effectively with their counterparts in the Northern hemisphere by improving on their visibility in conferences and other international events in order to effectively commission evaluation in Africa (Ofir, 2014). Currently, considerable effort by African evaluation thought leaders is being put into strategizing ways to integrate African knowledge and practices effectively in Africa and across the globe. It became clear to these thought leaders in recent years that evaluators need to recognize more explicitly the African context within which evaluation in Africa takes place. Also, there is a need for African-rooted evaluation designs and methodologies employed across the African continent (Chilisa, 2015; 2012; Cloete,

2016; Mouton et al., 2014; Ofir, 2014). Specific strategies to achieve this include: (1) Developing capacities for innovation in African evaluation and at the same time respecting the principles of capacity development as an endogenous process; (2) expanding the pool of evaluation in Africa by increasing knowledge generated about evaluation in Africa; and (3) catalyzing a strong movement towards ‘thought leadership’ that can enhance the evaluation profession in Africa (Mouton et al., 2014).

The field of evaluation in Africa is at a critical juncture as it faces new scrutiny and questions about its responsiveness to context and its sensitivity to the needs and realities of the continent’s populations (Chilisa & Mertens 2021:241-253). Programme evaluation—defined by Fournier (2005) as, ‘an applied inquiry process for collecting and synthesizing evidence that culminates in conclusions about the state of affairs, value, merit, worth, significance, or quality of a programme, product, person, policy, proposal, or plan’ (p. 139-140)—is playing an increasingly important role in the international development landscape (Mertens & Wilson 2012). Governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and bilateral institutions now all require evaluation of their programmes, policies, and interventions. However, recent analyses of both the political economy of evaluation in Africa and its attendant methodologies and approaches (Chilisa 2012, 2015) have highlighted power differentials that influence practice and have raised questions including:

- Who sets the agenda for what should be evaluated, and how?
- Which evaluation firms and evaluation consultants are hired?
- Which evaluation questions and evaluation methodologies are used? and
- Whose knowledge counts?

Chilisa (2015) and members of the African Evaluation Association (AfrEA, 2007) have employed these questions to prompt the development of a Made in Africa Evaluation (MAE) framework. Chilisa explored the concept’s history, meaning, and application by examining the consensus (and dissensus) among some expert evaluators in the field. She discussed, for example, the centrality of relational epistemology,

methodology, and axiology in MAE, as well as the importance of context. She also signalled some discord and unresolved questions regarding the contours of the concept, due in part ‘to whether scholars can originate evaluation practices and theories rooted in African world-views and paradigms and indeed if African paradigms exist’ (Chilisa 2015, p. 27). As such, her effort stopped short of offering a concise definition of MAE. This study sought explicitly to build on Chilisa’s foundational work to contribute to MAE’s refinement and to ascertain the extent to which it is gaining acceptance and prominence among those engaged in evaluation efforts across Africa. Theoretically, this study was informed by a postcolonial critique of the development project and neoliberalism (Fanon 1965; Harvey 2007; Tiffin 1995). Our analysis also drew on decolonizing and indigenous methodologies (Chilisa 2012; Cloete 2016).

We postulate that MAE represents an alternative to the Western-centric epistemologies and ontologies that characterize the neoliberal ‘development project’ (McMichael & Weber 2020). Many critiques of those frames have examined their failure in Africa through the lens of postcolonialism (Lundgren & Peacock 2010). Postcolonial indigenous theory and decolonizing and indigenous methodologies present a post-structural worldview that deconstructs neoliberal truths and norms that have been presented as normal and natural, showing them instead to be colonizing and inequitable (De Sousa Santos 2018; Tamale 2020). Informed by this framing, this study addressed the following research questions:

1. How do thought leaders in the African evaluation field define Made in Africa Evaluation?
2. How are MAE principles operationalized and presented in evaluation reports?
3. What next steps do African evaluation thought leaders believe are necessary to advance the MAE concept?

In the remainder of this chapter, we present the methods, results, and implications of an empirical research on evaluation study addressing those research questions. While the field has benefited from an increase in conceptual literature on MAE in recent years (Chilisa & Mertens

2021), we posit that the social and scientific value of this paper derive from the fact that the research reported here takes a unique empirical approach designed to help the field move towards a clearer conceptualization and definition of MAE, thereby positioning the concept for further uptake, use, and study.

METHODS

This study addressed the following research questions: (1) How do thought leaders in African evaluation define Made in Africa Evaluation? (2) How are MAE principles operationalized and presented in evaluation reports? (3) What next steps do African evaluation thought leaders prioritize to advance the MAE concept? Even though this study is informed by decolonizing and indigenous methodologies, it, however, uses a Delphi technique which is informed by the positivist or pragmatist paradigm to address the first research question. This is because it is the best methodology to develop a consensus definition that will adequately address the research question.

Study Design

It employed multiple methods; it made use of a Delphi technique, semi-structured interview process, and the evaluation of documents and reports. The Delphi technique involved two rounds of survey, a qualitative feedback process, and analysis of participants' statements. Further, it made use of a survey in the form of a questionnaire for the same Delphi participants, a semi-structured interview process for two additional experts (participants), and evaluation documents and reports to achieve the purposes of the research. Multiple method approaches in social science research are generally used to strengthen research designs. This is because each method has both strengths and weaknesses (Brewer & Hunter, 2006). Also, our Delphi participants completed an online questionnaire to garner additional data on topics such as participants perception of the needed next steps in the process

of developing the MAE concept, that extended beyond the data collection format used in the Delphi portion of the study. Finally, we interviewed two additional experts and reviewed evaluation guidance documents and reports. Multiple methods generally strengthen research designs because specific strategies have both strengths and weaknesses (Brewer & Hunter 2006). Mertens 2008 argued that using multiple methods helps in developing credible and accurate measurements and can increase study validity. It achieves this by triangulating sources and capitalizing on the strengths of each method employed (Creamer 2017). In addition, given that this study is theoretically guided by postcolonial concepts, the use of multiple methods helps open up the study for the inclusion of more voices and perspectives, thereby helping to hedge against the reification of dominant knowledge regimes. Individual in-depth interviews with two additional evaluation experts strengthened our Delphi-related results. Finally, our analysis of evaluation reports complemented our use of the Delphi technique with a cadre of African evaluation experts. This study was approved by [Institution name] Institutional Review Board (IRB) (Protocol # 18-640).

The Delphi technique is an iterative survey method, developed by the RAND Corporation to systematically solicit informed opinions from participants within their domain of expertise and knowledge base (Helmer-Hirschberg 1967; Hsu & Sanford 2007). More specifically, according to Hsu and Sanford (2007), the Delphi technique 'is a widely used and accepted method for achieving convergence of opinions concerning real-world knowledge solicited from experts within certain topic areas' (p. 1). To implement the Delphi method, multiple rounds of questions based on a list of statements about the topic at hand are sent to an expert panel, who rate and add to the statements. The researchers then incorporate and synthesize the first round of expert panel responses to yield new statements and initial analyses which are then returned to the experts for further input.

Again, this study is informed by decolonizing and indigenous methodologies, it, however, uses a Delphi technique which is informed by the positivist or pragmatist paradigm to address the first research question. This is because it is the best methodology to develop a consensus

definition that will adequately address the research question. We selected a Delphi analysis to address our first research question for several reasons. First, the iterations embedded in use of the Delphi technique made it possible to build consensus or dissensus (Hsu & Sanford 2007) among those we surveyed concerning the MAE concept. The method's feedback process provided an opportunity for the experts involved in our Delphi process to reassess their initial judgments. Second, the approach is well-suited to gather detailed data from experts in a way that promotes their broad participation because expert respondents could be located anywhere geographically. Finally, the use of email allowed participants time for reflection concerning their responses and therefore helped to reduce pressure on them (Dalkey 1972; Hsu & Sanford 2007).

In line with use of the Delphi technique, and to address the first research question, we purposively selected seventeen prospective participants. We reached out to those individuals using publicly available email addresses, and seven of the seventeen agreed to participate in the Delphi portion of this study. Two additional individuals agreed to an in-person interview; their comments and insights added validity to our findings. For both the Delphi phase and the interview, we selected potential participants who met the following criteria: (1) Top management decision-makers, including evaluators or evaluation commissioners in African governments, multilateral intergovernmental organizations (e.g., UNICEF), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and bilateral development entities in Africa; (2) African evaluation thought leaders, based on their work with AfrEA and previous championing of MAE; or (3) Have conducted evaluation research and have written explicitly or indirectly about MAE in their publications. Additionally, we required that invited participants have had at least ten years' experience in research or practice.

Delphi Methodology

The first round Delphi survey provided the expert panel a list of ten statements describing MAE. To construct those statements, we identified prominent and common concepts that previous authors had

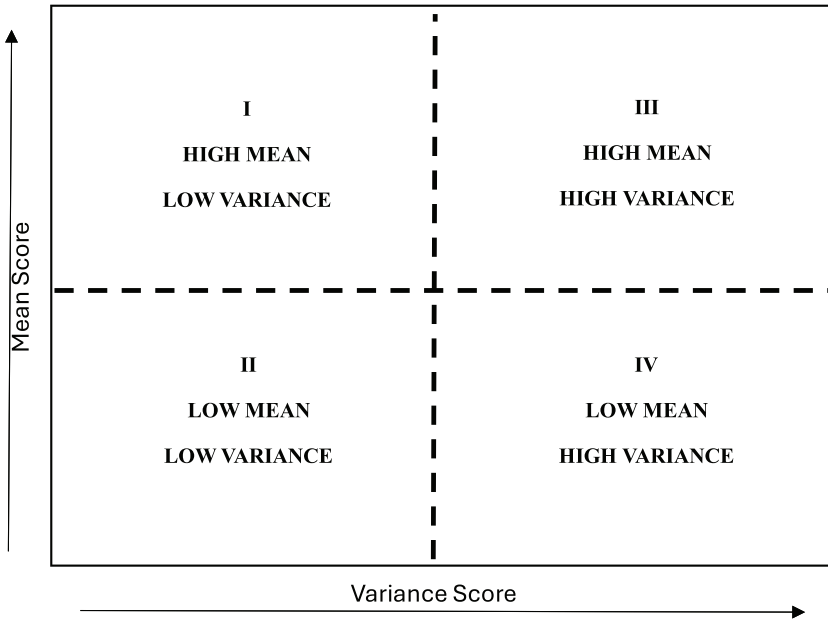
employed in the salient literature to describe Made in Africa Evaluation. We sought in this round for participants to rate the relative importance of the derived MAE descriptors on a scale of one (least important) to six (highly important).

In addition to completing their importance rankings for each descriptive statement, we asked each respondent to provide up to five additional descriptors that, in their view, described MAE, but that were not captured in the original ten depictions. These additional statements were then included in subsequent rounds to also be rated by the rest of the expert panel.

Developing Consensus Criteria for Both Rounds

We defined respondent consensus as the extent to which individual scores demonstrated agreement concerning an item's level of importance (Vo 2013). More specifically, we calculated the variance of ratings for each statement as well as the average variance among all descriptions evaluated. For this study, we defined consensus as having been attained when the variance for a statement was less than the average variance of all descriptors judged in that round. Conversely, we judged that disagreement remained among our respondents when an individual statement's variance was greater than the average variance of all of the descriptions evaluated. Statements with very low variance or deviation from the mean suggested consensus. We constructed a two-by-two matrix to plot the relative mean scores and variance scores for all statements (see Figure 1). Statements found to have high consensus would then appear in quadrants I and II in Figure 1. We included statements on which disagreement remained in a second survey for re-rating by our expert respondents. Round Two followed the same process of analysis to determine the level of importance attached to each remaining statement by our study participants.

Figure 1: Possible Categories of Statements with Respect to Averaged Mean and Variability



2.2.2. Developing a Working Definition of MAE

After analysing both rounds of surveys, we noted the final mean and variance values for each statement on which our respondents reached consensus. We also plotted the final mean value of each consensus statement against the final variance value in a scatter plot diagram. Quadrants I and III in Figure 1 contain statements with high mean values and hence, high importance in our respondents' view. Meanwhile, quadrants I and II contain statements with low variance values, and therefore, consensus. More importantly, quadrant I offers statements with high mean and low variance values. In other words, panellists reached consensus and accorded these descriptors a high level of importance in both survey iterations.

We performed a content analysis on the Quadrant 1 statements. We jointly selected a central theme for each statement and employed those

as codes for each (Corbin & Strauss 2015; Glaser & Strauss 1967). Taken together those constructs constituted the elements used to elucidate a working definition of MAE, shared in the results and discussion sections, below.

Interview Methodology

To triangulate and augment the validity of the findings from the Delphi portion of our analysis, we interviewed two additional African evaluation experts. These participants agreed to an individual interview to share their perspective on the MAE concept, also because they were not available to participate in the full-fledged Delphi study. We conducted a semi-structured online (via video Skype) interview with each individual. While a larger sample of interviewees would have added still further nuance to the study, we appreciate the triangulation and thick description provided by even these two in-depth interviews.

Document Analysis Methodology

We asked our Delphi survey respondents to suggest links to reports they had written or of which they were aware that employed the MAE concept to address our second research question. As a reminder, this method was used to help address Research Question 2, How are MAE principles operationalized and presented in evaluation reports? However, when our participants did not suggest any reports, we purposively selected six evaluations reports from the databases of recognized evaluation funders and commissioners that potentially provided evidence of applying the MAE concept. We next present and examine those reports.

Using a document analysis (concept mapping) approach (Canas et al. 2008), we pilot tested our newly-developed MAE definition to analyse the six selected evaluation reports.

More specifically, using concept mapping, we read through each document at least two times, looking for evidence of the central themes of the MAE definition we had derived from our Delphi participants.

Actionable Items Prioritization Methodology

In addition to asking our study participants to rate MAE related statements in order to enable us to develop a working definition of the construct, our Round 1 survey asked our experts to evaluate the importance and feasibility of twelve actionable items to further develop and promote the MAE concept, as enumerated by Chilisa (2015). Since Chilisa presented these steps originally to chart a possible path forward for MAE, we used our empirical study as a way to build on and extend her 2015 work. Chilisa's action steps are represented in Table 1 by statements W_1 to W_{12} .

Table 1: Twelve Actionable Statements Rated by this Study's Delphi Participants

Statement #	Statement descriptions
W_1	Create a team to promote MAE
W_2	Establish research groups on MAE and publish scientific articles and the results of assessments that use the construct
W_3	Organize international conferences and seminars on MAE and fund presentations to international organizations of papers addressing MAE
W_4	Fund research on MAE and evaluations that may be used as test cases of its utility and validity
W_5	Create partnerships to fund African academic institutions to engage with MAE-inspired evaluations
W_6	Create a course / curriculum on MAE and fund short courses on such evaluations
W_7	Develop strategies aimed at securing MAE influence in the development and implementation of national and regional evaluation policies
W_8	Create strategies for MAE to influence regional and national policies
W_9	Set up evaluation review boards
W_{10}	Review and revise AfrEA guidelines in the light of the MAE approach

(Continued)

Table 1: Twelve Actionable Statements Rated by this Study's Delphi Participants (*Continued*)

Statement #	Statement descriptions
W_{11}	AfrEA should engage other African organizations such as the African Union (AU) and other global partners
W_{12}	AfrEA should develop strategies to strengthen its internal governance to enable engagement with partners

Adapted by the authors from Chilisa (2015).

We used Microsoft Excel to calculate the means for each of the statements concerning the criteria we asked our respondents to employ to evaluate each. We created a slope graph, presented in the Results and Discussion section, depicting the relationship between the assigned mean scores for the level of importance and the level of feasibility of the twelve actionable items.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To lay a proper groundwork for the discussion of the working definition of MAE, we examined the relevance of cultural diversities and contexts in evaluation. Hopson (2009) has noted that evaluation must be specifically tailored for groups and communities. The entire process and the design of evaluation must be responsive to the different contexts where evaluands (programmes and interventions) are situated. Also, evaluation scholars have developed assumptions that have formed the foundations of good evaluation practice that is responsive to contexts and local cultural realities. These assumptions are: (1) The lived experiences, and the social location of the evaluator are important. (2) Evaluators are important in furthering social change and justice. (3) Evaluators must embrace multiple perspectives. (4) Culturally and ethnically diverse communities have useful contributions to make in the evaluation process. (5) Culture is central to the process of evaluation. (Hood, Hopson, & Kirkhart, 2015). Similarly, in the African evaluation landscape, these assumptions have become the foundation

for discussion for a made in Africa evaluation that should be strengthened and promoted around African diversity. As introduced early on, African evaluation scholars like Bagele Chilisa, Fanie Cloete, Zenda Ofir, and others have expressed in different literature and fora the need for MAE that is consonant with the above assumptions. However, the divergent and sometimes fractured discussion about the MAE concept has resulted in a splintered understanding of the concept.

Panellists rated the importance level of a total of fifteen statements as a part of the Delphi process that addressed a range of issues linked to the MAE concept. In the end, panellists ranked four statements (S_5 , S_7 , S_8 , and B_3) as most important, as shown in Table 2 below. The 'S' statements were from the original Delphi round's prompt, while 'B' statements were generated by expert participants themselves and then included in Round 2. Since our objective was to define the Made in Africa Evaluation (MAE) concept more effectively, we derived the central theme of each of the four statements and used those descriptors as codes for each (Corbin & Strauss 2015; Glaser & Strauss 1967).

Table 2: Important Statement to Panellists at the End of the Study and the Statements' Codes.

Statement #	Statement description	Central Ideas/ Codes
S_5	Conducting evaluation in African settings using localized knowledge, tools and data collection methods	Localized methods
S_7	Conducting evaluation with an eye towards promoting African values and worldviews	Promotion of African values
S_8	Adapting my evaluation work to the lifestyle and needs of the African communities in which I work	The lifestyle of the people
B_3	Conducting evaluation studies that are consistent with evaluation standards developed and used by the African Evaluation Association (a Volunteer Organizations for Professional Evaluation, or VOPE) and aligned with the professional standards of the individual African countries in which such efforts occur	AfrEA evaluation standards

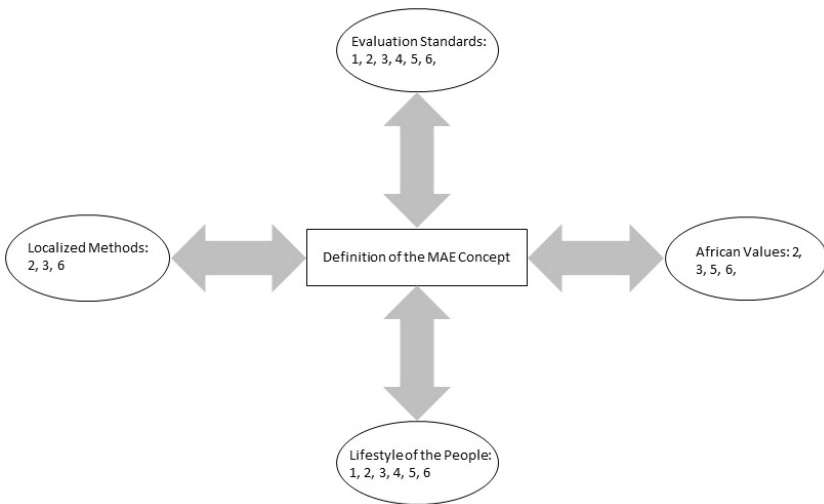
The four major themes above were conformation with AfrEA's standards; the use of localized knowledge, methods, and approaches; aligning evaluation to conform to people's lifestyles; and the promotion of African values. Each idea presented is considered central to each of the statements. Taken together, these animating ideas as represented in the central ideas/codes form a working definition of MAE: 'Evaluation that is conducted based on *AfrEA standards, using localized methods or approaches* with the aim of *aligning all evaluations to the lifestyles and needs* of affected African peoples while also *promoting African values*.' For any evaluation work to be considered Made in Africa, it must align with this definition, especially with its key elements. Such evaluation must align with the guidelines of AfrEA or VOPE where the evaluand is situated. The evaluation process must employ localized knowledge and methods, the evaluation purpose, design, and operation must align with the lifestyle and the needs of the people, and overall, it must promote African values.

Eight central themes emerged in our interviews with the two evaluation experts: (1) The importance of guidelines when conducting Made in Africa Evaluations; (2) Importance of research concerning MAE; (3) Cultural competency and MAE; (4) Further research on localized methods; (5) The integration of international practice and AfrEA standards in MAE; (6) The relevance of culturally responsive evaluation (CRE) in MAE; and (8) The way forward for the MAE concept. For example, when asked if satisfied by the consensus definition of MAE we developed on the basis of our Delphi process respondents' views, one interviewee emphasized the need to probe further in what constitutes 'localized knowledge.' In her view, such knowledge must be incorporated in ways beyond citing and using examples of localized methods.

Another aim of this study was to explore how MAE principles are operationalized and presented in evaluation reports. As noted above, we purposively selected six evaluation reports from the archives of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the United Nations International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF). We used concept mapping to analyse each report in light of our working definition of MAE.

To illustrate the presence and distribution of each theme in each report a concept map, which appears as Figure 2 below. The Figure suggests that the six evaluation reports align with AfrEA’s evaluation standards and the needs of the African people. Further, African values were evident and promoted in reports 2, 3, 5, and 6, while evaluators employed localized methods in numbers 2, 3, and 6.

Figure 2: A Concept Map showing the Presence and Distribution of Each Theme in Each Report.



3.1. Results from the Actionable Items Prioritization Process

The panellists considered Chilisa’s 2015 twelve actionable items (represented by W_1 - W_{12}) in Table 1 above, which she presented as way posts for refinement of the MAE concept but only statements W_4 (fund research on MAE and evaluation that may be used as a test case for MAE) and W_{10} (review AfrEA guidelines in the light of the MAE approach) stood out for our respondents, with high mean scores for both their levels of importance and feasibility. Statement W_4 has a mean score of 4.43 and 4.00 for the level of importance and of feasibility respectively, while

statement W_{10} has the same mean score of 4.29 for both its perceived level of importance and feasibility.

IMPLICATIONS

The main result of this study is the newly elucidated definition of MAE, which in turn lends itself to a number of other implications for evaluator training and capacity building, evaluation practice, evaluation policy, and research on evaluation. We address each of these implications next.

Evaluator Training

The recognition of AfrEA and other relevant Volunteer Organizations for Professional Evaluation (VOPE) guidelines; the use of localized knowledge and approaches; the increased consideration of the lifestyles of populations of interest; and the promotion of African values are central to the concept of Made in Africa Evaluation. Previous efforts have sought to expand the field by teaching evaluation competencies to ensure that would-be evaluators possess necessary technical skill-sets (Thomas & Madison 2010). However, beyond acquiring such competencies, our findings suggest that African evaluators need to become deeply aware of African philosophies and values, as revealed across the continent.

For example, in southern Africa, there is a popular philosophy of life called *ubuntu* ('I am because we are'). In such communities, no single person can claim to speak for the entire community (Chilisa 2012; Cloete 2016). A similar philosophy is ingrained in western African culture. For example, in the Yoruba culture among the people of Nigeria and other West African countries, embrace *ajose* and *ajobi*, a view that prizes collectivism and not individualism (Omosa 2016). While these examples might be multiplied, a sensitivity to their existence and significance appears vital in the training of young and emerging evaluators (YEEs) in Africa if evaluators are to realize the aims of MAE.

Evaluation practitioners in Africa should be trained to situate their understanding of the theory and practice of evaluation in a way that is open to a critique of Eurocentric models of evaluation which continue to deny the important place of Africa's rich history, context, and philosophy in evaluation. Therefore, efforts such as those underway or recently completed by the Centre for Research Evaluation Science and Technology (CREST) at Stellenbosch University) and by Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results – Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA) are to be commended in this regard.

Evaluation Practice

One finding of this study corroborates the need, expressed elsewhere, to review current AfrEA guidelines in the light of evolving definitions of MAE; this can potentially enhance MAE and, ultimately, yield better evaluation practice in Africa. For continuous growth and development in any field, there is a need to revisit foundationa and improve on them continually. The governing board of AfrEA might consider reframing AfrEA guidelines to align them with the current thinking on MAE.

Going further, the board could consider contributing to the professionalization of the field by making sure those who apply to be members of the association demonstrate competence in reflective, situational management, and interpersonal practices. This effort will take the field a notch higher, beyond technical skills, for 'harder' skills like reflexivity. The Canadian Evaluation Society (CES) has demonstrated this by making sure Credentialed Evaluators demonstrate similar reflective practice competencies (Canadian Evaluation Society 2010). AfrEA can adapt this initiative from CES to encourage MAE in Africa through the professionalization of the field in Africa.

Evaluation Policy

On a broader level, past evidence has shown that policies designed in Western countries are not necessarily effective in African countries because they are in different contexts that prioritize different values

different from Western values. A major assumption that undergirds neoliberalism is that individuals are economic agents that are rational decision-makers (Brown 2009). Neoliberalism assumes humans pursue their self-interests, the 'me-first' thinking that makes them a rational and efficient consumer without a sense of social responsibility and empathy for others. As elucidated in this study, the field of evaluation is now considering this same argument that methods and approaches from the Global North may not be suitable for the African contexts. As a result of this, African governments and other evaluation funders and commissioners must develop policies and action plans that are well-suited to the African lifestyles and experiences and promote their values in order to have enduring policies that will improve evaluation practice in Africa. To buttress this, the developed definition of MAE proposed in this study emphasizes that Made in Africa evaluation must be aligned to the lifestyles of the people and must promote African values (though some debate persists as to what constitutes 'African values,' since there is a need to avoid overly sweeping cultural generalisations). To achieve this, evaluation policies should be developed to reflect these findings by governments and other major stakeholders in the field of evaluation in Africa.

Research on Evaluation

As with every good nascent and emerging concept, the MAE will continue to be enriched. It will continually be shaped and framed by different perspectives and thinking so that we can start seeing changes in practice. One key finding from this study is the need for further research to operationalize localized methods and approaches. For example, what are specific examples of localized methods or approaches? What are the implications of methods involving storytelling, local courts, campfires, and proverbs? Also, what are the ways to actively represent and recognize these approaches in evaluation reports? Chilisa (2012, 2015) has contributed much to the exploration of these terms and approaches. However, the need remains for further research along this line.

STUDY LIMITATIONS

Delphi methodology conveys important advantages, but it also has its limitations. Questions are often raised about the accepted sample size for a good Delphi study. Also, since the Delphi methodology is iterative and sequential due to the layered feedback process integral to the concept and use of it, some uncertainty can arise about the process when the sample size drops during the study due to participant attrition. Notably, in this study, due to personal and other issues beyond their control, two panellists had to be excused during the second round of the survey, and this reduced the number of panellists from seven to five.

However, it has been empirically established that the sample size has minimal impact on the quality of data during a Delphi study. What is most important in a Delphi study is the level of training and knowledge of panellists about the subject matter. In particular, Akins, Tolson, and Cole (2005) established that response characteristics are stable for a small expert panel when the knowledge area is well-defined. In other words, there is stability in response characteristics irrespective of the sample size. One final methodological quandary related to our use of the Delphi method is that it itself is not a Made in Africa approach; it represents a Western epistemological ontological, and methodological assumptions. Yet, while some may find it ironic to study African methodologies using a non-African method, we maintain that the tool was appropriate for the job at hand (i.e., arriving at expert-based consensus).

In addition to the established findings discussed above, this study included interviews with two other stakeholders who champion MAE. These interviewees were initially scheduled to be part of the Delphi panellists but opted out because of their busy schedules. These interviews provided an extra layer of validity to the findings from the Delphi. Participants interviewed did not only offer their understanding and definition of the concept, but they also offered a critical lens of the consensus definition developed from the Delphi.

Additionally, six reports were sampled to address the second research question, which are not a comprehensive reflection of all

evaluations on the continent. As such, claims about the mainstreaming of MAE concept in Africa may not be robust. However, it is sufficient to address the question since the main thrust of the question is to test-run the developed consensus definition of MAE and explore some illustrative ways in which evaluation in African aligns with the principles of MAE.

CONCLUSION

This chapter's contribution to the field is a working definition, however tentative, of Made in Africa Evaluation, which other practitioners and scholars are invited to further test and apply. We posit that the definition shared in this manuscript is a significant accomplishment in evaluation theory in Africa, which will, in turn, influence the practice on the continent. Beyond coming up with a definition of Made in Africa evaluation, which is a critical step in evaluation theory and practice in Africa, the evidence presented above points to the need for the concept of MAE to be mainstreamed by making sure it gains acceptability, prominence, and wider use among African evaluators. This can be one step in generating new possibilities for praxis in the face of the dominant power-knowledge assemblages that characterize postcolonial contexts.

It is important to note that this study made a step towards this by investigating how the concept is presented and operationalized in evaluation reports. Additionally, from the study, a panel of experts prioritized the next level for the concept in Africa which also move the concept towards its mainstreaming. However, even though these are important steps made towards mainstreaming the concept there is need for further research that will ingrain and mainstream the concept and make sure it gains wider coverage, acceptability, prominence, and use in the African continent. Lastly, as with every emerging concept, it is expected that the findings from this investigation will contribute to improving evaluation theory and practice in Africa, though that they will also require further critical testing and feedback. Insights gained

from future research on the MAE concept will inform efforts to more clearly describe and articulate the concept, enrich the discipline and ultimately improve practice and policy-making.

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Disclaimer: The views expressed in the chapter are our own and not an official position of any institution or of any of our study respondents.

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Chapter 8

Evaluation with Indigenous Lenses: The Cultural and Systemic Barriers

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ABSTRACT

African Indigenous evaluators are increasingly advocating for the integration of Indigenous knowledge systems and other cultural values into evaluation theories, philosophies, and practices because Euro-American concepts tend to disregard Afrocentric evaluation norms. Using a qualitative strategy of inquiry grounded in multiple case studies and an indigenously responsive evaluation approach, this chapter identified and analysed several challenges associated with cultural integration into contemporary evaluation theories and methods in Ghana and Africa at large. The chapter discusses challenges in integrating indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) into evaluation activities, including epistemological differences, indigenous cultural guilt, power dependency, post-colonial legacies, and inadequate capital, influenced by sub-national, national, and external factors. Thus, a synergy between Afrocentric and Euro-American evaluation methodologies could enhance efficiency and broaden processes, deepening the discourse on 'Made in Africa' evaluation.

Keywords: Evaluation, culture, indigenous evaluation, indigenous knowledge systems

INTRODUCTION

It is becoming increasingly recognized that including indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) in evaluation methods, theories, and practices is essential for developing thorough and culturally or indigenously suitable evaluations (Chilisa et al., 2016; Boadu & Ile, 2023). Nonetheless, several inflexibilities arise when integrating IKS into evaluation because of the epistemological differences (Chilisa et al., 2016), power disparities in the evaluation knowledge production (Boadu, 2024), historical and colonial injustices (Chilisa, 2012; Khumalo, 2022), and divergent contextual values (Thomas & Parsons, 2017). Evaluation philosophies, theories, and practices are rooted in knowledge politics; thus, they should be contextualised and culturally suitable by context-specific values, norms, and other cultural realities. For the indigenous evaluator in Africa, the challenge is to aid in bridging the cultural gap within the evaluation methods, theories, and practices.

The 'Made in Africa' (MAE) evaluation may not be realized until Afrocentric ideas, embedded in African values, norms, and cultural realities, are rooted in the contemporary evaluation frameworks (Easton, 2012; Gaotlhobogwe et al., 2018). The MAE should be constructed on preexisting indigenous relational networks and other institutional mechanisms (Chilisa & Mertens, 2021). Evaluation theories tend to overemphasize Euro-American perspectives at the expense of Afrocentric concepts (Chilisa et al., 2016). Nonetheless, the former tends to incorrectly diagnose the evaluation measurement and outcomes in Africa (Gaotlhobogwe et al., 2018; Jeng, 2012). Consequently, efforts would inevitably be made to incorporate Afrocentric ideas into the pursuit of evaluation in Africa (Easton, 2012). For instance, dialogues and 'talking circles' have been argued as key African indigenous deliberation approaches for collective decision-making (Boadu, 2022; Mbava, 2019) and active participation of relational stakeholders in what is evaluated, when, by whom, how, and for whom (Mbava & Chapman, 2020).

Easton (2012) reasoned that there are several evaluative impulses present in African proverbs, which could be developed into a culturally responsive evaluation (CRE) or indigenously responsive evaluation (IRE).

Besides, evaluation is an everyday social activity within the indigenous context (Chilisa et al., 2016). Thus, emphasis should be on how the core values of community spirit, belonging, oneness, ubuntu, dialogue, collectiveness, and consensus building, among others, should be adopted in the evaluation development process (Tirivanhu, 2022). Cultural notions of community spirit and relational patterns ought to drive evaluation practice in indigenous contexts (Chilisa et al. 2016; Tirivanhu 2022).

The intersection of culture, knowledge system, and value for evaluation has been pursued since the establishment of the African Evaluation Association (AfrEA) in 1999 (Chilisa & Malunga, 2012; Cloete & Auriacombe, 2019), but efforts to contextualise evaluation using indigenous cultures, knowledge, and values have not been realised because evaluation in Africa largely remains dependent on external theories and techniques. Chilisa et al. (2016) defined culture to be a lived reality (the nature of ontology), knowledge systems (epistemology), and values (axiology) (p. 314). There is genuine evidence that the assumptions underpinning ontology, epistemology, and axiology can be used to guide evaluation research and practice in Africa (Chilisa et al., 2016). There is an apparent preference for mainstream evaluation frameworks in the evaluation of sub-national and national development projects. Thus, indigenous evaluation research and practices are often disregarded in the evaluation of community-based development projects in Ghana (Boadu et al., 2021), and the situation is not different in many other African countries.

Although there are substantial studies on monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in Ghana (Akanbang & Abdallah, 2021; Gildemyn, 2014; Tengan & Aigbavboa, 2017), and participatory evaluation (Boadu & Ile, 2019), there are limited studies on indigenous evaluation. Besides, Easton (2012) identified evaluative impulses in West and Eastern African proverbs and cultural realities, indicating evaluation philosophies rooted in indigenous knowledge systems and cultural activities. This is a testament that there is a need to examine the factors that have hampered the integration of indigenous philosophies, theories, and practices into evaluation activities in Ghana. The following were the primary research questions that guided the study:

1. What are the impasses of indigenous values in evaluation in Ghana?
2. What notions have explained the indigenous evaluation dilemmas in Ghana?
3. To what extent have the challenges associated with indigenous evaluation impacted the use of indigenous approaches in Ghana?

CULTURE, INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS, AND EVALUATION

Chilisa et al. (2016) criticize evaluation methods and approaches for frequently emphasizing individual results, quantitative statistics, and donor-driven evaluation while ignoring the complex and relational elements of Indigenous viewpoints, which are rooted in relationship-based evaluation. Although Africa has had a great stride in the past three decades regarding integrating Afrocentric values into the research and practices of evaluation, nonetheless, the African voice is still limited in the evaluation literature, thus the quest for the incorporation of African values in evaluation (Mapitsa & Ngwato, 2020; Mbava & Chapman, 2020). What has been lacking for the take-off is the political will and power dynamics, the multiplicity of indigenous values, and cultural guilt conditions (Mapitsa & Ngwato, 2020; Boadu, 2024).

Power disparities and economic drawbacks have served as some of the pitfalls from which Euro-American evaluation knowledge and values have thrived to the detriment of indigenous values (Chilisa et al., 2016). Eurocentric and Afrocentric, Global North and Global South, developed and developing, First World and Third World are just a few of the binaries that colonial and neo-colonial stereotypes have created between Africa and the rest of the world. These narratives, either explicitly or implicitly, tend to undermine notions of development and evaluation in Africa. Furthermore, Africa is the subject of intense scrutiny through the prism of Euro-America, which has hindered efforts to challenge the existing status quo in terms of evaluation and development strategies and practices.

Evaluation values underpinning IRE and CRE are often used interchangeably in the literature (Brown & Lallo, 2020; Chilisa et al., 2016; Cram, 2018; Cram, Chilisa & Mertens, 2013). The notion of indigeneity is a feature of lived realities, shared relations, and engagement within and among relational structures in a specific cultural setting (Cram, 2018; Cram et al., 2013). Indigenously responsive evaluation or culturally responsive evaluation is rooted in evaluation activities that are driven by indigenous values and other cultural value systems (Chilisa et al., 2016), which differ from mainstream evaluation theories, approaches, and practices. The basis of both concepts is that evaluation activities within the indigenous setting cannot be 'indigenously or culturally neutral' (Chilisa et al., 2016; Hopson, 2012). Thus, the sovereignty of indigenous societies should be of great interest to both the indigenous and non-indigenous evaluators (Brown & Lallo, 2020) when embarking on any evaluation activities.

Evaluation, which is a social activity (Hopson, 2012), cannot disregard the influence and impetus of culture because culture is built into the fabric of human relationships and activities. As a result, there is an increasing interest in incorporating CRE concepts into evaluation (Easton, 2012). The CRE is a theoretical, intellectual, and fundamentally political viewpoint that emphasises the significance of culture in evaluation research and activities (Hopson, 2012:431). Cultural features are given considerable consideration in evaluation and are influenced by local socio-cultural, political, and external variables (Easton, 2012; Hopson, 2012).

Mbava and Chapman (2020: 2-3) argued that 'the relevance of values and culture in African contexts should be seen in contemporary knowledge systems and included into the African model of evaluation'. Several studies in recent times have attributed various terms to the notion of cultural evaluation such as culturally responsive indigenous evaluation (CRIE) (Bowman, Francis & Tyndall, 2015; Goyena & Fallis, 2019), relational evaluation (RE) (Chilisa et al. 2016; Visse, Abma & Widdershoven, 2012), 'tribally-driven' or 'tribally-based' evaluation (TDE) (Letendre & Caine, 2004). Reinhardt and Maday (2006) termed it as a 'tri-lateral evaluation model-where the influence of the

indigenous people is the focal point of discussion', and CRE (Brown & Lallo, 2020; Cloete & Auriacombe, 2019; Thomas & Parsons, 2017). The notion of indigenous evaluation is based on multiple social relational mechanisms.

Brown and Lallo (2020) argued that indigenous relational patterns and other cultural values are firmly embedded in cultural evaluative values. Indigenously driven evaluation approaches tend to place much emphasis on the integration of indigenous values and the active participation of indigenous people in the pursuits of evaluation (Mariella et al., 2009). Indigenously driven evaluation approaches tend to complement community-based participatory monitoring, such as participatory rural appraisal (PRA), and participatory action research (PAR) (Smith et al., 2010) approaches and practices. Thus, many indigenous evaluators in Africa and other parts of the world have advocated for the decolonisation of evaluation ideas by putting indigenous and other cultural values at the centre of evaluation research and practice (Chilisa & Malunga, 2012; Cloete, 2016).

The 'CRE frequently focuses on who participates, how they participate, how frequently they participate, and whose information feeds the evaluation and is thought to be most useful' (Stickl Haugen & Chouinard, 2019). However, the role of culture has been limited in the evaluation of research and practices in Africa (Chilisa & Malunga, 2012). Thomas and Parsons (2017) reasoned that despite the established CRE ideas, the practices and approaches are still emerging in public policies and donor-funded development programmes. Nonetheless, CRE is gaining traction in the fields of process and programme evaluation (Hood, Hopson & Kirkhart, 2015). The CRE tends to give a unique viewpoint on evaluation activities because of the inclusion of indigenous norms and other cultural factors (McBride, 2011; Thomas & Parsons, 2017). There is a growing trend among African indigenous evaluators to include culturally appropriate values in the continent's evaluation frameworks (Mapitsa & Ngwato, 2020; Pophiwa & Saidi, 2022).

Culturally responsive evaluation philosophies require an epistemological change from contemporary evaluation models and practices that tend to delimit the evaluator's ability to better unpack and

unravel the complexities associated with evaluation activities (Thomas & Parsons, 2017). The CRE approaches are guided by distinct cultural values, concepts, and methods; however, the main underlying principle is to integrate cultural ideas, patterns, notions, and relational frames into the approaches and practice of evaluation (Frierson, Hood & Hughes, 2002; Thomas & Parsons, 2017). Cultural evaluative values, ideas, and practices in Africa lie at the heart of Afrocentrism (Mkabela, 2005), which is rooted in indigenous values, norms, proverbs, and other cultural realities.

Culturally evaluative ideas have the potential to shape evaluation theory and practice in Africa, judging from recent CRE studies (Chirau & Ramasobana, 2022; Mapitsa & Ngwato, 2020; Popphiwa & Saidi, 2022). Contemporary evaluation notions seem to push CRE values, knowledge, ideals, and other cultural realities on a modernisation guilt path where cultural evaluative values and philosophies tend to be deemed anachronistic in evaluation research and practice. However, several studies have argued that Afrocentric evaluation ideas are not anachronistic; rather, they can supplement mainstream evaluation theory and practice. Evaluation is becoming a ubiquitous phenomenon; thus, the need for contextual values and cultural realities has become paramount in the evaluation research and practice (Chilisa et al., 2016; Mbava & Chapman, 2020; Popphiwa & Saidi, 2022). Thus, the integration of Afrocentric values into the theory and practice of evaluation has become imperative (Mbava & Chapman, 2020). With a few notable exceptions, evaluation activities tend to focus on donor-driven initiatives in Ghana and Africa at large (Chilisa et al., 2012; Moore & Zenda, 2012). Thus, the evaluation guidelines, methods, and practices are often set by these philanthropic organisations who have little to no knowledge about the African cultural context (Chilisa et al., 2012).

Chilisa et al. (2016) argued that Euro-American evaluation approaches have failed to properly measure the development programme outcomes on the continent. Thus, current evaluation approaches and practices must incorporate indigenous people and their knowledge systems (Chilisa & Mertens, 2021). Chilisa et al. (2016) observed that Euro-Western evaluation and research theories and

methods tend to sideline and disregard the relevance of knowledge systems from former colonies that were historically oppressed. The notion is that former colonies in Africa have anachronistic values, which tend to cause evaluators to self-question the relevance of cultural values in evaluation (Mbava & Chapman, 2020; Popphiwa & Saidi, 2022). Power dynamics also exist in the creation of evaluation agendas, who decides when to begin, the approach, and the theory to be used. These issues include whose knowledge matters (Chilisa et al., 2016), and whether it is Afrocentric or Eurocentric.

Evaluation courses in higher education and other educational institutions across Africa are predominantly centred on Euro-American theories and practices. However, in recent times, some African scholars, including Chilisa and Mertens (2021), Mbava and Chapman (2020), and Mapitsa and Ngwato (2020), have initiated a variety of research efforts and projects to enhance indigenous and other African knowledge systems in evaluation research and practice. The integration of indigenous knowledge and culture into evaluation activities can foster collaboration between indigenous people and sub-national and donor-driven agencies for community-based development evaluations (Mariella et al., 2009). Bowman and Dodge-Francis (2018) argued that the social, political, and cultural setting within the indigenous communities informs the evaluation framework, which tends to alter the strategy and level of engagement in the evaluation activities. Mapitsa and Ngwato (2020) asserted that indigenous relational networks are essential in the design of sustainable evaluation research and practice. Thus, a recent quest to integrate Afrocentric values in the approaches, methods, and practices of evaluation on the continent.

RESEARCH METHODS AND DESIGN

Thematic analysis was used in this article (Vaismoradi, Turunen & Bondas, 2013). The findings offered in this article were part of a research study conducted in the year 2021–2022 regarding the factors

affecting the integration of cultural values into evaluation concepts and practices in two traditional areas in the Eastern Region of Ghana (see Table 1). During the field interviews, several research themes were discussed, including indigenous relational networks, indigenous stakeholders, indigenous evaluation activities, indigenous people's participation in community-based development, indigenous information gathering, feedback mechanisms, and the challenges of integrating cultural values into evaluation activities within the indigenous settings.

Case study areas

Based on both internal and construct validity rather than external validity (i.e. generalisability), multiple case study approaches were adopted as the method of inquiry (Mariotto, Zanni & Moraes, 2014; Stewart, 2012). Furthermore, using the 'four-dimension criteria' (credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability) put forward by Lincoln and Guba (1986), the researcher planned for and conducted a series of key informant and semi-structured interviews. Interviews were conducted with four traditional leaders (sub-divisional leaders, heads of clans), nine community development leaders, six opinion leaders, and three local government officials. To obtain a meaningful account of the drawbacks of indigenous RE approaches, multiple case studies were used because of the ability of the approach to provide the researcher with a comprehensive understanding of the two indigenous communities and their social settings. Examining the communal assessment factors in the indigenous communities under study was key to ascertaining some of the challenges and providing pragmatic remedies. The study used two traditional areas, Akuapim Traditional Council (ATC), and Akye-Abuakwa Traditional Areas (AATA) situated in two local government areas (Akuapim North and Suhum) in the Eastern Region of Ghana as case studies, and a total of 22 participants were interviewed in both areas (see Table 1).

Table 1: A table showing case study region, districts, traditional areas, and categories of participants.

Region	Districts & traditional areas	Categories	Respondents ID	Number of respondents
Eastern Region	Akuapim North (AN), Akuapim Traditional Council (ATC) (ATCNA)	Traditional leaders (sub-divisional leaders, heads of clans)	TATC	2
		Community development leaders	CATC	5
		Local government officials	LOAS	1
		Community Opinion leaders	COPL	3
	Suhum Municipality (SU) (Akyem-Abuakwa Traditional Area) AATA (ATCSU)	Traditional leaders (sub-divisional leaders, clan heads)	AATC _{1&2}	2
		Community development leaders	CATA	4
		Local government officials	LOSU	2
		Community opinion leaders	COPL	3
Total				22

Source: From the field data, 2022-2023

Sampling approach

There was only one sampling strategy used. Within the two local government districts, the two traditional areas were chosen using a convenient sampling technique (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016). The key informant interviews (KIIs) and semi-structured interviews with traditional opinion leaders, local government officials, and community development leaders both used the same sampling technique.

Data collection tools

The research used several data collection instruments to solicit the necessary information. The instruments employed in this article have been outlined in the following sub-sections.

Key informant interviews

Using in-depth KIIs (Kumar, 1989), traditional opinion leaders were interviewed. Key informant interviews were utilised to obtain relevant information from knowledgeable indigenous opinion leaders who have in-depth knowledge and perspectives on indigenous relational assessment processes. A total of nine interviews were conducted in both traditional areas. The interviews were audio recorded, and each lasted between 45 and 60 minutes, which were later transcribed for further analysis. Also, nine community development leaders took part in KIIs.

Semi-structured interviews

To augment the KIIs, semi-structured interviews with two-way communication (Creswell, 2017) were utilised to allow participants to voice their views on community-based evaluation procedures and the challenges. Besides, community dialogues are key principles in traditional societies. Thus, semi-structured interviews were conducted with three (3) local government representatives who are key role players in community-based development activities.

Participants' observations

To maintain some level of data correctness, coherence, and robust interpretations, a participant observation approach (Sedano et al., 2017) was used to gather certain aspects of the data through careful notetaking and recording of the sequence of relationship assessment processes. Using the following themes: cultural guilt challenges, power dependency dilemma, globalisation and localisation hindrances, post-colonial legacies, revenue and urbanisation, an ethnographic observation was conducted by the researcher, where he lived in the communities for over 6 months. The technique gave the researcher the chance to participate in and interact with the indigenous community leaders in a variety of social contexts while also observing social gatherings, individual, and communal activities in various settings.

Documentary evidence

By utilising a documentary approach to research (Ahmed, 2010) and triangulating the available grey literature on traditional and modern decentralised government institutions and development activities in Ghana, the article supplemented the field data. Using a content analysis approach, several documentary literatures such as the *Chieftaincy Act, 2008* (Act No. 759), which focuses on the interest of indigenous and tribal peoples in Ghana, the *Local Governance Act, 2016* (Act No. 936), ministerial reports, policy briefs, and research articles were analysed.

Summary of the methods

A theme analysis technique was used in this article. Using various case studies, data were collected through interviews from several respondents within the case study areas employing a convenient sampling technique. The main data collection instruments were key informant and semi-structured interviews. Several interviews were conducted with traditional leaders, community opinion leaders, local government officials, and community development members, totalling 22 participants. In addition to the basic data gathering technologies, participant

observation and documentary evidence were analysed through the technique of data triangulation.

Data analysis approach

A variety of qualitative data analysis techniques were used. The initial analysis was critical and focused on constructing a narrative account of indigenous perspectives on RE, impasses related to theories, techniques, and practices, and the ideas that underlie indigenous evaluation conundrums. Additional narratives about the challenges of incorporating indigenous or cultural evaluation norms and practices into contemporary evaluation were generated. The analysis approach espoused open coding techniques to compare the data from the two traditional and local government areas at the same time to generate additional useful categories (see Kenny & Fourie, 2015). The study was interested in the connections between the various categories, hence, the axial coding helped to identify the changing connections between the categories (Charmaz, 2017) by rearranging and reclassifying the codes according to their relationships.

The field interviews were audio recorded and transcribed for analysis. The transcripts were then studied and repeatedly read to find pertinent patterns that could be matched to the various themes and give answers to the research questions. Field data were analysed using a variety of qualitative data analysis techniques. Data triangulation technique (Bengtsson, 2016) was utilised to enhance the possibility of controlling, or at the very least assessing, some of the factors influencing the conclusions by validating the multiple data points through cross-verification to ensure consistency of findings. The data obtained from the field interviews (transcripts) were triangulated with the documentary literature by reading them several times and finding patterns and relationships within and among the various textual data. Documentary data that had a direct impact on the study were the ones that were triangulated. The research project received ethical clearance from the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, South Africa (Ethics Reference Number: HS18/6/17).

FINDINGS

This section builds on the discussion of cultural values in evaluation and delineates several dilemmas associated with cultural competence in evaluation, including the ethical and notional challenges. Besides, contemporary fields of evaluation still have a long way to go before they can fully integrate cultural factors. Although evaluation notions rooted in cultural values have begun to be examined, it appears that they have yet to be widely utilised and considered effective in evaluation research and practice. This section discusses the following pitfalls: cultural guilt challenges, power dependency dilemma, globalisation and localisation hindrances, post-colonial legacies, revenue and urbanisation issues that have made it difficult to incorporate cultural concepts into contemporary evaluation methods and practices in Ghana.

The cultural guilt and capacity dilemmas

It was indicated that the evaluation knowledge production is rooted in cultural superiority and often indigenous evaluative values and ideas, and disregarded in the mainstream evaluation framework due to the contentions embedded in tradition and modernity. In Ghana and Africa at large, cultural ideas and values are under enormous scrutiny despite the embedded evaluative notions in communal arrangements and other cultural realities. Despite the obvious evaluation notions and practices that exist in Indigenous relational patterns and cultural ideas, there is resistance on the part of some evaluators and international development institutions to adopt the Indigenous evaluation methods due to cultural biases and institutionalised disinterest. The evaluative impulses derived from indigenous values, proverbs, and other relationship networks seem to be disregarded. A respondent from the ATC traditional areas lamented in the following interview extract:

‘Most people enjoy cultural celebrations and festivals, but sub-national and national development experts tend to neglect cultural ethics when it comes to community-based development

and evaluation activities. The local people have very little say in the evaluation and development decision-making process.’¹

The given remark indicates that development and evaluation researchers and experts tend to disregard indigenous values because they frequently get caught up in modernisation complexities and Western value superiority. It was indicated that there are very few opportunities that exist for sub-national development evaluators and the Indigenous people to learn and harness the Indigenous development and evaluation approaches. A community development leader further lamented that:

‘... cultural values and other significant local ideas expressed through the indigenous relational patterns about community development and evaluation activities are often not the preference of donor funders, sub-national and national development expertise.’²

Most community-based development programmes are frequently directed and supervised by field evaluators and development specialists who venerate Euro-Western evaluation notions to the detriment of indigenous values. It was clear that sub-national policymakers’ predilection for mainstream administrative and governance structures makes it difficult for them to incorporate Indigenous evaluation and development concepts into contemporary evaluation structures because of their rigid preference for donor-driven frameworks.

Power disparities and dependence dilemmas

Power dynamics influence local and stakeholder participation as well as whose knowledge needs to be considered in designing the evaluation activities. The integration of cultural values in evaluation research and practice has often been linked to knowledge politics and power relations. These shape the evaluation knowledge within and among the

1 Interview with a traditional leader from ATC.

2 Interview with a community development leader from ATC.

indigenous relational structures and the sub-national institutions. This was explained by a traditional opinion leader in the following interview excerpt:

‘... the indigenous relational structures used to serve as the ... governing and [social] accountability institutions. It is still influential today, but it has little power to influence the incorporation of cultural values into community-based development decision-making and evaluation activities. Local government development institutions [*that prefer contemporary development and evaluation arrangements*] wield disproportionate power [*compared to the indigenous relational arrangements*].’³

While most indigenous relational networks (see Figure 1) and other social frameworks were previously used, many have been deemed outdated by the introduction of the local government decentralised systems. As a result, state-led local government bodies are being created to integrate development and evaluation concepts into community-based development and evaluation research and practice. When it comes to community participation, evaluation activities, and social accountability, power dynamics are also present within indigenous relational systems, as indicated in Figure 1. In the following interview excerpt, a community development leader observes:

‘We tend to overemphasize modern values to the detriment of indigenous value systems when it comes to development, evaluation, participation and accountability but we all know they have failed us ... and local government agencies are built on these modern development ideals, and we are directly or indirectly made to adhere to rather than our cultural values [*relational arrangements*].’⁴

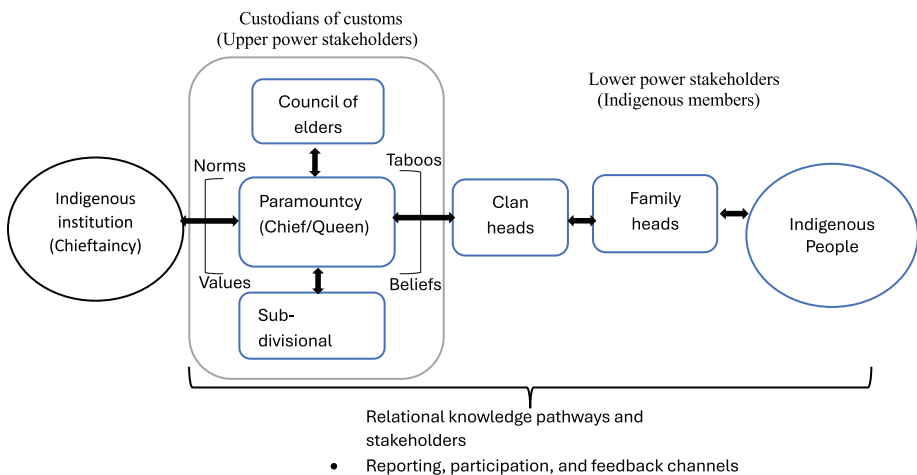
3 Interview with a traditional opinion leader from AATA.

4 Interview with a community development leader from ATC.

The evaluation practices and models used in assessing community-based activities are trapped in Euro-American evaluation values, which have been pushed by the sub-national development institutions but are not in tune with culturally sensitive development and evaluation practices. The evaluation practices and models used in assessing community-based activities are trapped in Euro-American evaluation values, which have been pushed by the sub-national development institutions but are not in tune with culturally sensitive development and evaluation practices.

The participation of relational stakeholders within indigenous contexts is influenced by power dynamics between and among upper (indigenous custodians) and lower power stakeholders (indigenous members) in the six indigenous layers, which comprise Chiefs or Queen, sub-divisional heads, council of elders, clan heads, family heads and the indigenous people as indicated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Indigenous relational knowledge, reporting and feedback pathways.



Source: Boadu (2023).

***Contemporary and indigenisation
asymmetry dilemmas***

The increasing acceptance of incorporating indigenous ideas into the form, nature, and practice of evaluation is evidence that each can contribute something to the other, even though contemporary and culturally relevant development and evaluation practices seem to be at odds with one another. A traditional leader expressed that:

‘... [Y]ou cannot do away with the indigenous people and their culture, knowledge systems, norms, and values. Local policies are frequently developed by assemblies and implemented in indigenous settings; however, the policies are successful when they take cultural philosophies and belief systems into consideration.’⁵

Although the indigenous people continue to hold customary beliefs in high regard, the cultures considered for the study are not wholly free from the effects of modern development and evaluative notions. A traditional leader decried the lack of recognition of indigenous people’s norms, practices, and knowledge:

‘Indigenous societies are not against evaluation and development notions; we just want our indigenous ideals, languages, and value systems recognised. A lot has changed over the years, but I do not believe we are leaving behind our cultural values and traditions because we are identified by these socio-cultural beliefs and value systems.’⁶

Indigenous people still cherish their socio-cultural ideals of communal accountability, dialogues, collaboration, and consensus building, inter alia, but they will openly accept modern development and evaluation concepts provided the latter recognise the importance of the

5 Interview with a traditional leader from AATA.

6 Interview with a traditional leader from AATA.

former. Language and communication problems have also hampered the integration of indigenous values into evaluative systems because the indigenous languages and some lexicons, proverbs, and axioms, among others, often do not correspond with mainstream evaluative conceptions, resulting in misunderstandings or loss of meaning. Even though indigenous and contemporary evaluation theories are significantly distinct, they may be utilised together to evaluate community-based initiatives to ensure that they are sustained.

Post-colonial legacy dilemmas

The majority of community development and evaluation activities are often trapped in local colonial legacies; thus, evaluation impulses embedded in indigenous values tend to receive relatively little to no reverence within already biased development and evaluation approaches, concepts and practices. A traditional development leader in the interview extract stated that:

‘Community-based development activities are often trapped in sub-national initiatives and often the evaluation guidelines are often initiated by the field officers. Existing cultural values and social networks when used are often altered by the field officers but are not given the needed recognition.’⁷

The preceding quote appears to indicate cultural appropriation and is unfair to indigenous people. It also implies that the current decolonisation discourse among several indigenous researchers, which focuses on culturally considerate evaluation attempts, will be futile if non-indigenous scholars and the local elite continue to dismiss the relevance of indigenous relations and practices. The preference for contemporary development and evaluation ideas and the neglect of indigenous knowledge systems by the educated elite, both at the sub-national

7 Interview with a traditional development leader from AATA.

and national levels, could serve as a drawback to the present decolonisation discourse.

It was found that the two societies partly use community development and evaluation mechanisms rooted in Euro-American principles. The indigenous relational institutions and other social principles such as ubuntu, dialogue, community spirit, consensus building, collaboration, self-organisation, inter alia, previously used are undermined by Western constructs and notions. A traditional leader in the following interview stated that:

‘... [I]ndigenous relational structures and values never fully gained their status in the current socio-political settings. Indigenous values continue to be scrutinised by sub-national entities, and this creates conflict instead of collaboration between the indigenous and local assemblies regarding whose knowledge and power should be dominant.’⁸

The quote indicates that colonialism changed the roles of the indigenous relational institutions and their knowledge systems. Besides, the current social, political, and economic systems have further diminished the use of indigenous knowledge systems and institutions.

Indigenous participation, mobilisation, and representation dilemma

Despite the strong social network systems within the Indigenous settings, the Indigenous people’s participation and representation are sometimes missed, resulting in tokenistic inclusion rather than meaningful participation. The results of the study indicated that self-organisation, dialogue, collaboration, talking circles, social networks, and community gathering are core Indigenous principles for community-based development decision-making and evaluation; however, they have become difficult to attain because of the neglect from sub-national

8 Interview with a traditional leader from ATC.

development establishments and rapid urbanisation in the two indigenous communities. It has become difficult for indigenous people to quickly organise and mobilise for community endeavours. This has also hampered 'communal labour' (community voluntary activities) as an indigenous development, evaluation, and fund-raising practice. As stated by a traditional leader from the AATA in the following interview excerpt:

'Social networking used for 'communal labour' [*community activities*] within indigenous societies is becoming more and more difficult due to the rapid urbanisation of these areas.'⁹

The traditional leader further emphasised that:

'Instead of indigenous town criers, traditional areas now use public address systems; however, it is also becoming harder to willingly get people to participate in these community development voluntary activities and keep track of them.'¹⁰

Moreover, an ATC traditional leader emphasised urbanisation and related issues that are steadily eroding the cultural value of 'communal labour' within indigenous communities:

'Before, indigenous leaders could mobilise their communities for a good cause with more authority, control, and influence. Town criers could quickly transmit an announcement to every subdivision when the traditional areas were small.'¹¹

The traditional leader further sheds light on the decentralisation systems within the indigenous areas:

9 Interview with a traditional leader from AATA.

10 Interview with a traditional leader from AATA.

11 Interview with a traditional leader from ATC.

‘... [D]ecentralised political structures are to blame for many changes within the indigenous societies. While local assemblies are mostly responsible for organising their constituents, indigenous leaders have limited power to do so.’¹²

The decentralised assemblies have great potential for development but have some consequences on the indigenous mobilisation systems as captured in the given interview extract. Indigenous development and evaluation concepts have the potential to achieve the needed outcomes if the design, implementation, and evaluation processes are decolonised, which requires material and financial resources. A traditional leader from AATC stated that:

‘... [I]ndigenous people used to mobilise their financial resources, but that is no more; the local government institutions have taken that responsibility. A lot has changed because of urbanisation and decentralised government institutions.’¹³

While urbanisation offers the potential for progress, it also poses a threat to the indigenous patterns of wealth mobilisation and self-organisation, as represented in the preceding quote.

DISCUSSION

Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous evaluators struggle with ownership, involvement, and the appropriateness of evaluation norms and values when integrating Indigenous knowledge into evaluation processes, as has been observed by many scholars (see Visse et al., 2012; Chilisa et al., 2016; Bowman & Dodge-Francis, 2018; Mbava & Chapman, 2020). Tensions often arise, especially when the Indigenous peoples feel excluded from decision-making procedures or when contemporary evaluation frameworks fail to consider their value systems

12 Interview with a traditional leader from ATC.

13 Interview with a traditional leader from AATC.

and other cultural realities. Evaluation ideas within the two case study areas are rooted in cultural ideas and social relations patterns (see Figure 1); however, these ideals are often directly or indirectly neglected by non-indigenous evaluators. While the actual outcome of the evaluation decolonisation process is not realised yet, the ongoing quest to decolonise the evaluation paradigms to contextualise a culturally responsive approach to research and evaluation is a step in the right direction. This article identified several factors that have influenced the integration of cultural evaluation values and philosophies into the evaluation research and practice.

The indigenous people, not the sub-national development entities, tend to understand and employ cultural evaluative values the most. The latter encourages the established wealth and power-based Western values that are often emphasised by development donors and evaluators over Afrocentric evaluation values, as also observed by Chilisa et al. (2016) and Gaotlhobogwe et al. (2018) in their respective studies in Africa. Thus, decolonising the methodologies is necessary because they are culturally biased and have not been successful in measuring or predicting evaluation outcomes in Africa (Chilisa et al., 2016). Nonetheless, power and wealth disparities exist within indigenous relational mechanisms, which often influence when the evaluation is initiated, who participates, by whom, for whom, and how (see Figure 1), and they are often culturally skewed.

Despite efforts by indigenous evaluators to integrate Afrocentric values into conventional evaluation strategies, there is a perceived disregard for indigenous evaluative values. The latter tends to perceive the former approaches as anachronistic and inclined to undermine the integration of cultural values into the evaluation research and practice. Likewise, the evaluation practices and frameworks used to measure community-based development activities within the two indigenous societies are influenced by mainstream evaluation notions, although they are out of sync with cultural evaluation values. Similar studies conducted in other parts of Africa found that evaluation research and practice are focused on Euro-American ideals of measurement, but there is a need to decolonise these standards so that evaluation methods and

practices are African-centred (Chirau & Ramasobana, 2022; Mapitsa & Ngwato, 2020).

The value of indigenous and conventional data collection techniques, distribution avenues, and feedback mechanisms within traditional communities is apparent. For information gathering and providing feedback in the two case study areas, both the traditional 'gon-gon beater' and contemporary public address systems proved to be effective (see Figure 1). To ensure effective and sustainable evaluation, there must be a synergy between mainstream and indigenous evaluation values, including data gathering innovation tools. Moreover, Chilisa et al. (2016) argued that evaluation within the indigenous context has the potential to achieve the needed outcomes when the strategies and procedures are rooted in context-specific cultural values.

It was found that the indigenous relational knowledge systems and values, as indicated in Figure 1, are being undercut by the weakening social networks and rapid urbanisation within the two case study areas. This has limited the influence of socio-cultural values and ethnic bonds within and among the upper and lower power stakeholders (see Figure 1). The indigenous social networks that support most indigenous activities, such as decision-making, dialogue, collaboration, self-organisation, and consensus building, among others, are being eroded as a result of the two communities' fast suburbanisation and urbanisation.

Evaluation activities within the case study communities were found to be rooted in the indigenous value of knowing and power. Within the six relational structures, as indicated in Figure 1, there is some level of power dynamics between 'upper power stakeholders' and 'lower power stakeholders' when it comes to community development decision-making and evaluation activities. The relational knowledge pathways serve as the basis for community decision-making and evaluation activities. A similar power and knowledge dynamics was found between the indigenous institutions and sub-national development agencies within the local government areas. The sub-national institutions tend to overlook the indigenous values, although they are chiefly different from contemporary notions of development and evaluation. Sub-national policy-makers struggle to integrate Indigenous evaluation and development

concepts into contemporary evaluation structures due to their preference for donor-driven frameworks, primarily due to their preference for mainstream administrative and governance structures.

Indigenous people's engagement and representation are frequently disregarded, resulting in tokenistic inclusion rather than genuine participation in Indigenous settings despite robust relational networks that support community mobilisation and participation. Indigenous assets mobilisation has great potential for community development and evaluation activities within the indigenous societies, yet it has been weakened by the introduction of local government revenue generation units, which tend to favour the sub-national entities to the detriment of the indigenous societies. Likewise, community mobilisation and self-organisation within the indigenous context are hampered by rapid urbanisation, which tends to limit the influence and control of the indigenous relational and social accountability mechanisms. Both factors tend to limit the efforts of indigenous people to incorporate socio-cultural and other relational patterns into contemporary development and evaluation activities (see Figure 1). Contemporary governance and development establishments within indigenous societies were perceived to have undermined cultural values in community development decision-making, implementation, and evaluation. Even though indigenous people adore cultural values, contemporary concepts, and governance systems sometimes undermine their usefulness in evaluation practices.

Western constructs and theories exert a certain influence on the decentralised creation and evaluation systems present in the case study areas. Likewise, the evaluation arrangements espoused by sub-national establishments within the indigenous settings are no exception, thus, the call from indigenous evaluators and researchers to decolonise and incorporate indigenous values is also recommended by Chilisa et al.'s (2016) study in Africa. It was found that sub-national development institutions prefer contemporary evaluation and development approaches and concepts within indigenous communities, at the expense of indigenous and cultural values that the latter saw as antiquated. The indigenous people, however, treasured their social

networks and other cultural values that influence societies, such as ‘communal labour’ activities and social accountability. Nonetheless, indigenous values and cultural realities are often disregarded in mainstream evaluation frameworks, but they could have a significant impact on the development of evaluation knowledge in Ghana and throughout Africa. Due to institutional indifference and cultural biases, some evaluators and international development organizations oppose using Indigenous evaluation techniques despite these cultural evaluative realities as observed by Boadu and Ile (2023).

The indigenous communities used as case studies tend to rely on cultural values and indigenous relational patterns when it comes to community-based development decision-making, social accountability, and evaluation activities (see Figure 1). However, the social relations or network systems and other cultural values are undercut by the established sub-national institutions, such as the regional coordinating councils and district assemblies, that are more driven by Western principles. The finding is consistent with Chilisa and Mertens (2021) study, where they observed that development decision-making and evaluation philosophies are not without geo-political and Western notions. There was a quest among the indigenous people for the integration of their socio-cultural values and practices into the contemporary development decision-making and evaluation activities. This is in accord with Mapitsa and Ngwato (2020) and Chilisa and Mertens (2021) studies, where evaluation activities are enhanced and sustained when sociocultural values are rooted in the evaluation practice.

CONCLUSION

The existence of indigenous evaluation ideas and relational patterns within the case study areas is not in doubt; however, the findings showed that the integration of such evaluation theories, methods, and practices into evaluation frameworks has been undermined by several issues, including modernisation issues, power disparities, globalisation and localisation, post-colonial legacies, financial resources

and urbanisation dilemmas. Besides, Afrocentric evaluation ideas and conceptions are frequently neglected in favour of Euro-American evaluation tenets. Non-indigenous evaluators and researchers tend to emphasise contemporary evaluation frameworks, which often have their roots in wealth and power, at the expense of indigenous evaluation principles. The notion is that the former has not proven to be a reliable measurement of evaluation. Post-colonial legacies within the case study areas frequently undermine the discourse surrounding the decolonisation of mainstream evaluation philosophies among indigenous evaluators and researchers. Non-indigenous evaluators, researchers, and the educated elite at the local government level tend to favour mainstream evaluation and development approaches over indigenous philosophies, which is a downside to the current decolonial discourse. Furthermore, indigenous relational structures are frequently overlooked, either directly or indirectly, by past social, cultural, political, and economic legacies, notwithstanding the evaluation impulses contained in indigenous relational patterns and other cultural realities inside indigenous settings. Despite the delineated constraints, the development of indigenous evaluation frameworks and activities in Ghana and other parts of Africa greatly benefited from the enormous indigenous relational philosophies and structures. These include community spirit, mutual trust, consensus building, co-ownership, self-organisation, and social accountability. These values are rooted in culturally sensitive evaluation, community-based M&E, tribally driven participatory evaluation, RE, and empowerment evaluations. To engender effective and efficient evaluation measurements and outcomes, a synergy between Euro-American and indigenous evaluation approaches, notions, and practices will generally widen the evaluation procedures and activities.

Notes

1. Interview with a community development leader from ATC.
2. Interview with a community development leader from ATC.
3. Interview with a community development leader from AATA.
4. Interview with a community development leader from ATC.

5. Interview with community development leader from AATA.
6. Interview with community development leader from AATA.
7. Interview with community development leader from ATC.
8. Interview with community development leader from AATA.
9. Interview with traditional leader from AATA.
10. Interview with a development community member from ATC.
11. Interview with a traditional leader from ATC
12. Interview with a traditional leader from AATC
13. Interview with a traditional leader from AATC

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Chapter 9

Evaluation in African contexts: The Promises of Participatory Approaches in Theory-Based Evaluations

Nombeko P. Mbava and Peter Dahler-Larsen

Background: A recent study of African evaluations identified deficiencies in present evaluation practices. Due to limited public sector expertise for the design of policy impact evaluations, expertise for such complex designs is largely external to the public sector. Consequently, recommendations made sometimes pay insufficient attention to variations in local contexts.

Objectives: The bold idea presented in this article is that theory-based evaluation (TBE) in its most recent participatory versions offers promising opportunities towards more flexible epistemology. When properly tweaked, tuned and adapted to local needs and demands in African contexts, better theory-based evaluations are possible.

Method: Three TBE-inspired criteria for better evaluations are suggested. The usefulness of including broad perspectives in theory-making was illustrated with a recent policy example, that is, the provision of tablets to school children in South Africa.

Results: A model of collaborative theory-making is presented. The pros and cons of the proposed hybrid model are discussed.

Conclusion: Recent trends in TBE point towards more participation of stakeholders in the theory-making process and towards more flexible epistemologies. The proposed innovation of TBE may have broader implications and serve as a promising inspiration for better evaluation practices in African contexts, given that existing research has demonstrated a need for such visions.

Keywords: theory-based evaluation; TBE; participatory evaluation; impact evaluation; realist evaluation; flexible epistemology; Africa public sector.

INTRODUCTION

A recent study of evaluations in South Africa has identified deficiencies in present evaluation practices (Mbava 2017; Mbava & Rabie 2018). The expertise for the design of impact evaluations specifically for complex interventions is lacking in the public sector (Basheka & Byamugisha 2015; Porter & Goldman 2013:8). Impact evaluations have therefore largely been led by multinational expert teams who had the skills and know-how to design highly complex evaluations (Mbava 2017:126). In addition, recommendations are often made in South African studies that do not pay sufficient attention to variations in local contexts where programmes are to be implemented (Mbava 2017:141). A simple adoption of evaluation practices from highly industrialised countries poses limitations and is 'unsuitable in non-Western cultural contexts where totally different principles and practices prevail. A one-size-fits-all recipe for evaluation is therefore impractical' (Cloete 2016:55). Others such as Ofir (2013:585) argue that methods adopted for evaluation and development have not fully appreciated the complexities of fragile contexts and developing societies and have tended to focus on simple interventions rather than on the reality of complex adaptive systems.

This raises the issue of evaluation capacity and the role of in-country evaluators. National evaluators too often play a limited role in the evaluation processes. For example, they act as liaisons with local

stakeholders or as helping hands in data collection, but too often they do not have prominent roles in defining thought and intellectual leadership in the evaluation process (Porter & Goldman 2013:8; see also the debate in Ramasobana & Ngwabi 2018, including points made by Mouton and Wildschut). Chouinard and Milley (2018:77) further argue that inclusion of local evaluators could shift from their conceptualisation as ‘data sources’ towards recognising such participants as being an intrinsic part of the evaluation.

Finally, evaluation approaches are often not attuned to key traits in African cultures and philosophies (Chouinard & Hopson 2016; Cloete 2016; Ofir & Kumar 2013). In particular, the prominent role of collective deliberation and communal decision-making in African contexts has not been fully appreciated (Chilisa, Major & Khudu-Petersen 2017).

In recent years, there has been an increase in literature describing the role of contextual relevance in evaluations (Chouinard & Hopson 2016; Ofir & Kumar 2013; Pawson & Tilley 1997; SenGupta, Hopson & Thompson-Robinson 2004), the inclusion of stakeholders in participatory evaluation (Chouinard & Milley 2017; Cousins & Chouinard 2012; King, Cousins & Whitmore 2007), as well as the significant engagement of various voices in knowledge generation towards ontological and epistemic justice (Carden & Alkin 2012; Mamdani 2016; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018).

We articulate three critical aspects whose application in evaluation designs could potentially result in participatory and transformative evaluation practices. These can be described as follows:

- Recommendations of interventions need to pay more attention to local variations in context.
- A broader role of local evaluators and thinkers, not only in the role of practical fixers and data collectors, but also in the central epistemological processes which are guiding and defining the evaluation and its focus.
- Evaluations that allocate more space to collective deliberation and communal decisions.

In our response to these challenges, we focus on theory-based evaluation. Our interest in this evaluation approach resonates with official policy in South Africa (RSA 2009: 21–22). The bold idea presented in this article is that theory-based evaluation (TBE) in its most recent participatory versions (Balle Hansen & Vedung 2010; Dahler-Larsen 2018; Funnell & Rogers 2011) offers promising opportunities towards more flexible epistemology. When properly tweaked, tuned and adapted to local needs and demands in African contexts, TBE could meet all three criteria stated above.

The purpose of this article is to unfold this hypothesis, considering both pros and cons. We recognise the contributions of responsive evaluation (Stake 2004), and culturally responsive evaluation (Hopson 2009), as well as contributions about indigenous philosophies in Africa (Ikuenobe 2017), but our claim is modest. In terms of evaluation approaches, we focus on TBE because it helps answer questions about impact, which continue to be of interest to donors, policymakers, and beneficiaries. TBE also aspires to base evaluative inferences on both critical thinking and empirical testing (Chen 2005; Rogers et al. 2000; Weiss 2000). At the same time, as these principles should be preserved, innovation is needed if TBE is to live up to the three criteria mentioned above. For example, in contrast to situations where local evaluation merely tests a theory that has been developed in the Global North (Carden & Alkin 2012:108–109), local participation should comprise genuinely epistemological questions. In the case of TBE that would mean involving local perspectives in crafting the very theories that are central in TBE. The local perspectives we refer to here are multidimensional. They include, but are not limited to citizenship, residence, language, culture, ethnicity, socio-economic positions and personal and professional experiences gained in situ.

Firstly, we present the findings of a recent review of evaluations in South Africa. Secondly, we explicate and justify three criteria for evaluations aimed at overcoming existing deficiencies. Thirdly, we describe how recent trends in TBE resonate with these criteria. Fourthly, we describe how local partners can be involved in theory-making, which constitutes a key epistemological aspect of TBE. We provide a short

illustration of how such theory-making might unfold, using South African President Ramaphosa's recently introduced policy intervention, tablets for school children, as an example. We end with a discussion of the wider applicability of the described approach and a conclusion.

A STUDY OF DEFICIENCIES OF PRESENT EVALUATION PRACTICES REGARDING WHAT WORKS IN WHICH CONTEXTS

A recent study was conducted in South Africa which aimed to provide better understanding of the methodologies and approaches used in past programme impact evaluations in the South African public sector and to reflect on the usefulness of evaluation findings to policy decision-makers (Mbava 2017; Mbava & Rabie 2018). The study design entailed extensive literature review, assessment of four impact evaluation case studies through the lens of a prominent version of TBE and key informant interviews with seven policy decision-makers, so as to determine the usefulness of the evaluations. The aim was to ascertain the most important limitations with existing policy impact evaluations and the suitability of adopted evaluation approaches. It was established that there are important gaps and limitations with existing policy impact evaluations.

Evaluation methods and designs are not always appropriate to inform the needs of policymakers. There are limited insights on programme pathways to change as a base of establishing how the programme works, in what context and under what conditions. There is also perceived limited utilisation of evaluation evidence in policymaking, as evaluation evidence is not effectively infused in the policymaking cycle (Mbava & Rabie 2018:89).

A key finding showed concern over limited understanding of the broader programme context because contextual conditions under which programmes are implemented are critical. Pawson (2006:31–32) emphasised that the broader programme context includes key actors and agents in the programme implementation chain, who can enable

or impede the implementation of the social programme based on their enthusiasm and will. Such stakeholders will invariably include intended programme beneficiaries, the programme staff, policymakers and other agents in the implementation chain. This broader context, which affects the efficacy and efficiency of a programme, was not found to be adequately interrogated to gain rich insights into programme context.

This is supported by the views of some of the seven key informants who highlighted important contextual aspects that are expected in order to elicit the most meaningful evaluations. Virtually all interviewed key informants (86%) preferred aspects of evaluation that specified ‘Who primarily benefited from the policy?’ and ‘If the intervention was successful, when and where can it be replicated?’ Insights on these aspects were seen as critical in order to ensure equity in programme design and implementation because ‘who exactly benefited and how equity is dispersed towards impact is critical in order to know whether the targeted beneficiaries were indeed the beneficiaries’ (Sector Expert Human Settlements Evaluations 2016 in Mbava 2017). Therefore, policy decision-makers want to know ‘For whom did it benefit and how did it work. To know whether policy should be targeted or done at full scale’ (Sector Expert Education Evaluations 2016 in Mbava 2017).

To answer these questions more precisely, this study explores whether participatory approaches to TBE are a promising possibility for evaluation in African contexts.

THREE CRITERIA FOR BETTER EVALUATION PRACTICES

This section explicates and justifies three TBE-inspired criteria for better evaluation.

Firstly, recommendations of interventions must pay more attention to local variations in context (Pawson & Tilley 1997). At best, these variations are empirically described in previous evaluations and existing research. In the absence of such evidence, it is still better to

base recommendations on well-reasoned theoretical conjectures about contextual factors which may be critical to the impact of interventions rather than merely assuming that the effects are the same everywhere.

Secondly, there must be more involvement of local evaluators, not only in the role of practical fixers and data collectors, but also in the central epistemological processes which are guiding and defining the evaluation and its focus. In TBE, the key epistemological process is the making of theory. Our justification for this criterion deserves to be made explicitly. As Schwandt (2002) and others (Julnes 2012) suggest, evaluation is a value-laden activity. Evaluators engage with values not only in relation to evaluation criteria, but also 'by providing stakeholders with the opportunity to actively engage in evaluation' (Schwandt 2015: 65).

It therefore constitutes a genuine problem if there is unequal access of voices to the key epistemic processes in evaluation. To make that argument is not the same as recommending one epistemology be replaced by another one, or for that matter that a modern set of ideas should be replaced by a traditional set of ideas or anything of that sort.¹ The point is merely that unequal access to influence theory-making in TBE can be regarded as a problem of fairness and justice. In addition, we will seek to show that participation of local perspectives in theory-making may also help make these theories more context-sensitive and better adapted to local realities. Finally, participation in theory-making might well be carried out in a way that reflects African traditions for collective deliberation and communal decisions. Again, our claim is modest. We are not advocating a romantic picture of participatory evaluation. We are talking specifically about local involvement in TBE, where theory-making is subsequently exposed to critical empirical testing. Experiences with this process indicate that this process is not always harmonious or uncontroversial (Dahler-Larsen 2018).

In this modest spirit, a hybrid version of TBE developed especially for African contexts is suggested. In the next section, it will be shown that there are recent turns and developments in TBE that create more open doors for participation and epistemological flexibility in a way that makes such hybridisation credible and possible.

THEORY-BASED EVALUATION: TRENDS TOWARDS A MORE FLEXIBLE EPISTEMOLOGY

A key ingredient in TBE is that programme theories are used as key tools in evaluation. A programme theory is a set of ideas or hypotheses that explain how and why an intervention will work, perhaps with a specification of why it works for a particular group of people in a particular context. The evaluation focuses on checking whether these hypotheses can be confirmed in the actual situation at hand (Coryn et al. 2011). This is usually based on empirical data, but critical thinking also includes whether a programme theory is logically consistent, credible and congruous with what is otherwise known about the intervention and the contexts in which it is supposed to operate. The use of programme theory is now commonplace and it has been mainstreamed and phenomenally applied in programme management processes in various programme areas. Programme theory is a core requirement, as evaluation commissioners require project proposals to initially specify the theory of change as a guide for assisting in programme design and evaluation (Rogers 2007:63–64). The theory of change is validated and tested by verifying the extent to which the theory assumptions are true against what is actually observed. TBE therefore provides for rigorous evaluation through systematic interrogation of programme theory as a basis for guiding the evaluation.

Wildschut (2014), Heradien (2013:79), Mbava (2017) and Abrahams (2003:268) have found TBE to be valuable and promising in African contexts. Policy decision-makers found that a variant of the TBE approach held much promise in a number of capacity development projects across Africa (Punton, Vogel & Lloyd 2016). It was suggested that TBE approaches can support the implementation of capacity development programmes on a broader scale.

1 No such wholesale type of argument is helpful. Instead, consistent with Ikuenobe (2017), we see both modernity and cultural tradition as multidimensional. This calls for hybridisation of ideas woven together in different ways to fit particular local needs.

South African government have recommended the strengthening of TBE approaches and articulated that the:

[A]nalysis of causal effects is currently weak, and the international good practice of theory-based evaluation needs to be strengthened. This would require, in the policy development and planning stages, a clear conceptual understanding of how, why and when the policy, programme or project will effect change, and how these changes may be measured. (RSA 2009:21–22)

We now turn to recent developments in TBE, which allow it to live up to the earlier-mentioned three criteria for better evaluation. Within the large tent of TBE, Realist Evaluation is a contribution to the evaluation body of knowledge built on the foundations of philosophical realism (Pawson & Tilley 1997). Pawson (2013:ix) points out that Realist Evaluation's standpoint is that of pursuing the high scientific objectives of objectivity and generative causal explanation to inform real world policy and practice.

Carden and Alkin's (2012:105) conceptual framework of the 'evaluation theory tree' places this TBE approach on the 'methods branch'. The core of the Realist Evaluation method is the articulation of programme theory that explains how and why programmes work and for whom they effectively work (Pawson 2013; Pawson & Manzano-Santaella 2012; Pawson & Tilley 1997). This is explained by the interrogation of the programme's broader context, understanding what causes the observed change and confirming that the observed outcomes validate the underlying programme theory. The success of an intervention is context-dependent and 'things work and effects occur only if the circumstances and conditions are right, and they may have to be very particular' (Pawson & Tilley 1995:23). This idea is captured through the conceptual framework of context-mechanism- outcome configuration or CMO (Pawson & Tilley 1997).

In contrast, constructivist programme theory breaks with the assumption so typical of the realist philosophy that causal mechanisms are

ontologically given and inherent to the real world. On the contrary, constructivists argue that no human being has ever seen a mechanism with his or her bare eyes. Constructivists understand causal theories as ways in which human beings make sense of a complex and messy world. For a constructivist, there is no direct access to the real world except through interpretation. The fact that causal theories are human constructs helps explain why there are so many diverse and incomplete causal theories connected to a given policy intervention. In an interpretive perspective, there is no ultimate principle inherent in reality which guarantees that human beings can find one and only one correct set of causal theories. As a consequence, this variation of TBE departs from a view that associates truth with social and political authority and instead creates a space for broader participation in theory-making (Vattimo 2004).

Furthermore, constructivists insist that the contexts that play such a critical role in realist philosophy are in fact better understood not as physical realities but rather as social constructions amenable to change through social and political processes (Dahler-Larsen 2001, 2018). For example, some theories may not work in a totalitarian regime but work well in a democratic one. In a similar vein, some public policies may work poorly when implemented in a corrupt regime, whereas they may work much better if corruption is removed. In other words, although realists are correct in saying that some interventions work in some contexts but not in others, constructivists argue that policies can be designed to change these contextual circumstances so that intended policies may work better. Social contexts also change over time as a result of broader societal changes that are not a result of deliberate policy (Dahler-Larsen 2001). This view also expands the space for flexible epistemology in TBE because both the contexts in which policies operate and the results of the same policies are results of a collective action rather than those of a given physical reality.

‘Flexible epistemology’ does not imply relativism. Just because knowledge production is social, it does not mean it is without rules and without critical testing (Latour 2004; Longino 2002). A constructivist perspective on TBE still maintains that critical thinking and confrontation with empirical findings are key ingredients in evaluation.

In practice, evaluators often do not explicate one particular underlying philosophy (Shadish, Cook & Leviton 1991: 43). Furthermore, their practical strategies are not determined by philosophical positions, as evaluators usually take situational factors into account. However, our argument is that changes in the philosophical ideas in TBE make it possible to bring TBE in position to be used pragmatically towards meeting the three criteria suggested earlier.

Flexible and pragmatic approaches in TBE have been seen in recent years, among other things in user-friendly terminology and in graphical forms of representation of programme theories that are intuitively appealing to people who are not usually comfortable with formal representation of theory (Funnell & Rogers 2011). This testifies to how TBE can be used flexibly without sacrificing the constructed theory, but to rather enhance the key ideas.

THEORY-BASED EVALUATION: TRENDS TOWARDS COLLABORATIVE THEORY-CONSTRUCTION

According to the most classical and conventional model, the responsibility for articulating the programme theory rests with the evaluator. In an expansion of this model, the evaluator consults with a group of stakeholders before articulating the programme theory. The purpose of this process is twofold, partly to inform the evaluator about relevant revisions of the programme theory, and partly to ensure that the stakeholders find the programme theory relevant and hence are more likely to accept the evaluation findings based on that theory. A key principle that holds this process together is thus the assumption of consensus. Although several contributions, additions or revisions may be discussed along the way, these are not reported in the evaluation report and not seen as relevant for the final evaluation results. The programme theory is quite naturally referred to as '*the* programme theory' in the singular (Balle Hansen & Vedung 2010).

In recent years, the assumption of one consensual programme theory has been problematised (Dahler-Larsen 2018). Balle Hansen

and Vedung (2010) suggest that when stakeholders are involved in theory-making, it may be more fruitful to articulate the theories of the different stakeholders clearly and keep them separate. By making the differences among theories visible, each group of stakeholders may learn to better respect each other's views. Furthermore, the different programme theories may be conducive to a democratic process of policymaking.

Dahler-Larsen (2018) goes a step further. He argues that very often, the same phenomenon may play two different roles, for example a positive one in one programme theory and a negative one in another. If that is the case, Dahler-Larsen recommends a combination of two conflicting programme theories in the same graphic representation so that the unfortunate interaction effects following from this double role become visible for all participants. Making the double role of some phenomena visible can facilitate a call to action among the stakeholders.

In an illustrative example, technical staff puts up a large ashtray outside a building. In one potential programme theory, the function of the ashtray is positive because it helps reduce the occurrence of cigarette stubs on the ground. In another potential theory, however, the function is negative because it undermines the prohibition of smoking, which should formally be in place. Because the ashtray is there, people think it is a good place to smoke, in spite of existing rules.

The dilemma in this double function is most clearly seen by juxtaposing the two programme theories. It is bringing the theories together, not keeping them separate, which makes the problem visible and collective action pressing. In the case at hand, it was easy to choose one solution consistent with legislation, which was simply to move the ashtray into a place where smoking was allowed (and clearly marked as such). In other situations, the double function of a phenomenon in several programme theories may be much more difficult to sort out. But at least the dilemma can be made visible. Examples of such double functions in real life might be dependency on drugs which may be negative for consumers, but profitable for the medical industry. Minimum wages may be good for people with jobs, but they may also, according

to some, keep people with few qualifications out of the labour market (Dahler-Larsen 2018).

Such problems may be impossible to solve. Only after a careful process of participatory theory-making can it be determined whether reasonable solutions to such dilemmas are feasible. It is hoped that the very participation in theory-making is a source of insight in itself, consistent with the idea that quite a bit of the use of evaluations already begins with 'process use', that is, learning evaluative thinking from participation in the process (Forss, Rebien & Carlsson 2002). Process use might include the collaborative reactions to the differences between different programme theories held by various stakeholders.

AN ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE OF THEORY- MAKING: PLANNED ROLL-OUT OF TABLETS ACROSS A PUBLIC SCHOOLING SYSTEM

In this section, we illustrate how the potential development of theory in TBE, with the involvement of multiple stakeholders, could take place in relation to a real-life case: Tablets for school children.

The White Paper on e-Education (RSA 2004) outlines the overarching policy framework for South Africa to transform learning and teaching as part of an inclusive and innovative digital and knowledge-based society. It focuses on ensuring that every school has access to a wide choice of diverse, high-quality information communication technology (ICT) services and infrastructure, which will benefit all learners and local communities and further calls for public-private partnerships and collaboration in the provision of ICTs in education. In line with this policy position, during his 2019 State of the Nation Address (SONA), South African President Ramaphosa introduced a plan about giving tablets to school children (RSA 2019). The alleged purpose is to enhance educational goals, including the acceleration of digital literacy. On that basis, a simple official programme theory is not difficult to delineate. The key proposition is simple: Tablets enhance learning.

The increasing attractiveness in using tablets as a teaching aid in primary and secondary education is well documented (Habler, Major & Hennessey 2015; Kalolo 2019; McFarlane 2015). It has been argued that the digital era promises to transform teaching and learning in ways previously unimagined and tablets can contribute to educational improvements (Erstad, Eickelmann & Eichhorn 2015; Kalolo 2019; McFarlane 2015; Van Deursen, Ben Allouch & Ruijter 2016). Various research reviews (Habler et al. 2015; Herodotou 2018; Kalolo 2019) indicate that integrating tablets in learning tasks can improve and support learning.

Let us now imagine a participatory process where various local stakeholders engage in collaborative theory-making about this initiative. Broadening the process will take theory-making beyond the thin and decontextualised story (Fischer 2003) expressed in a programme theory such as 'tablets enhance learning'. At the same time, the sources of programme theory will not rest solely with research, but include experiences and perspectives from a variety of stakeholders such as state planners and funders, educators, curriculum and subject advisors, book content providers and publishers, various ICT service providers who will ensure infrastructure and connectivity, device procurement specialists, school governing bodies, learners and parents. These are presumably some of the key actors and agents in the school tablet roll-out implementation chain. Unconventional types of stakeholders such as hackers may also be able to contribute with knowledge about security risks and how to avoid them.

The task for all is to contribute to a plausible school tablet roll-out programme theory that pinpoints key implementation variables and effects of tablets, including side effects.

Educators who embrace technology as an enabler in teaching and learning think tablets are useful teaching aids. Schools' acquisition of physical stock of books is no longer a necessity. They no longer go missing. E-texts are in the latest edition, cost-effective, occupy less space and are easier to carry around. Digital tools are conducive to a dynamic learning environment (Kalolo 2019:353). Professional development and provision of educator learning materials in this regard are well received.

Although this theory is plausible, others have argued that the assumption that teachers are ready and eager to integrate tablets from the outset is not realistic in the absence of adequate initial professional development and change management, technical support and clear policy guidelines (Cantrell & Visser 2011; Habler et al. 2015). Tablets and other devices have been viewed with hostility by schools and regarded as disruptive in bringing the outside world into the school (McFarlane 2015). Cantrell and Visser (2011:282) found that lack of experience with computers, computer anxiety, suspicion towards technology and change were some of the factors inhibiting a positive attitude towards technology adoption. Traditionally minded teachers will be of the firm view that learners should read and learn from hard-copy textbooks, write on paper using pen and receive instruction from a chalk-holding teacher lecturing in front of a blackboard. This is the tried and tested method of learning and teaching, as they themselves were schooled similarly. The traditional classroom model has been in use in most developing countries, where knowledge gained by the teacher is imparted top- down to learners, and where distribution of hardcopy learning material, note-taking and oral instruction are prioritised (Kalolo 2019; Miah & Omar 2012).

There is tension between old and new models of learning with teachers as agents of change, confronted with demands to adapt and integrate technology or risk being discouraged and ambivalent (Erstad et al. 2015). In other words, teacher attitudes and preconceptions about ways of learning may be an important contextual factor that helps explain various outcomes of tablets. The effectiveness of tablets as an educational device hinges on the ability of teachers to integrate the use of tablets into meaningful pedagogical processes. Teacher education must be part of the intervention. This exemplifies how a contextual factor can be seen as either a given fact or a variable that can be influenced by policy.

Teachers and others with insights into the daily lives of school children might suggest that the motivation of students to use the tablet for educational purposes rather than, for example, for entertainment purposes is critical to the success of the programme. In fact, on a bad day,

when tablet-based teaching may not be a focus in the teacher's pedagogical plan for the day, tablets may distract learners rather than support their learning process. A double role for tablets may be suggested here, unless school rules and pedagogical interventions take steps to prevent it. An important factor influencing the intended use of tablets is thus the quality of the digital educational content to be used on the tablet. This educational content must, at best, be easy and fun to use, and at the same time it must enhance the achievement of educational goals. Otherwise, education might compete with entertainment in the use of the tablet.

Finally, how can it be ascertained that tablets are operational and charged, also for children who live in areas or households where electricity cannot be taken for granted? Will the tablet be handed out for free? If yes, who is accountable if it is lost, stolen or cannot be found? These are critical issues that policy decision-makers are confronted with. According to Kalolo (2019:347), developing countries face a particular set of problems in relation to digital technologies. The tablet plays a double role, positive in some theories and negative in others. Although the tablet may genuinely be of benefit for the child, a tablet is also an object with a market value. Carrying a tablet to school and back may therefore put children at risk, exposing them to potential theft, robbery, or threats, especially in troubled areas. Unless this problem is addressed, the tablet may in some situations be a liability rather than an asset for the learner. Would a solution be to lock away the tablets at school at the end of the school day? If so, what would be the impact on learning and when, where and how much the learners use tablets? Without someone aboard the theory-making process who has attention to socio-economic issues and variations in risk across neighbourhoods, these aspects related to the use of tablets in real life may remain blind spots in the wider implementation process.

Admittedly, what we have sketched here is a conceptual, albeit realistic example. Nevertheless, it illustrates that a composite theory that includes both contextual variables and interaction between different theory logics is bound to be complex. It is quite likely that even a

good process of theory- making will not be able to account for all factors that are critical for the effectiveness of the tablets programme from the outset. However, a broad inclusion of perspectives is likely to lead to a richer and more context-dependent theory-making compared with the optimist and simple version where tablets simply enhance learning. Thin political stories become richer stories only through contextualisation (Fischer 2003).

The dynamic nature of theory-making would suggest that a pilot programme should be tested out in a few local contexts before tablets are rolled out in the entire nation. In other words, we advocate something more dynamic than a classic process of the following form: Policy decision – implementation – evaluation as indicated in Figure 1. Instead, we propose a circular process demonstrated in Figure 2, more like the following: Policy decision – collaborative theory-making – pilot projects – evaluation with improved collaborative theory-making – revision of policy design – implementation in broader scale – evaluation with improved collaborative theory-making, and then again policy decision.

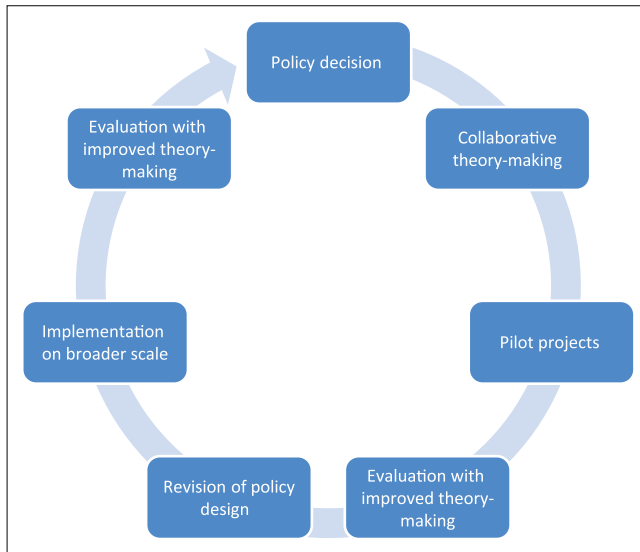
Quite a few benefits of the TBE process may be harvested in early stages of the policy process by thinking critically about the intervention and adapting it to foreseeable contextual circumstances as well as by summarising learning points from early pilot projects. Further on, collaborative theory- making is used iteratively through the whole policy process representing a stock of knowledge gained so far as well as a resource for next immediate steps.

The example shows a way in which TBE can be sensitive to variations in context. It allows for extensive participation of local stakeholders, not only in superficial roles, but in the very epistemological core of TBE, that is, theory-making itself. The success criterion for theory-making is not that it provides ultimate evidence of the effect of the intervention, but that it helps stakeholders determine the extent to which it works for particular recipients in particular contexts and what the next reasonable steps are regarding improvements of the intervention.

Figure 1: The classic policy implementation process.



Figure 2: Theory-based infused policymaking.



DISCUSSION

Developing a hybrid version of TBE that fits well into African contexts is not easy. Much work must be carried out by intermediaries, brokers, bridge-builders, evaluators and thinkers. There is a need to develop practical languages and presentation styles, which may help make programme theories and theory-making better understood and articulated from stakeholders' perspectives.

It is commonly acknowledged that TBE is time-consuming. 'If TBE is carried out in full detail, it is apt to be an expensive and time-consuming enterprise' (Birckmayer & Weiss 2000:429). Up to one-third of the time designated to an evaluation process can be dedicated to

theory-making. Not all stakeholders in all situations will find it possible and meaningful to set aside the necessary time for such a process. On the positive side, however, learning effects may occur already as a function of the theory-making process. Stakeholders may also learn to better appreciate each other's perspectives (Balle Hansen & Vedung 2010). Not all use of TBE has to await evaluation findings.

Findings from TBE evaluations might suffer from lack of credibility unless they satisfy high methodological expectations that might exist among some stakeholders. Theory-driven evaluation could potentially be resource intensive as it requires rigorous testing of programme theory so as to ascertain plausibility (Marchal et al. 2012).

For those whose expectation is that without control groups, no causal inferences should be made, TBE may produce results that are perceived to be weak, even if carried with the utmost methodological sophistication. Designs with a control group are not always feasible. TBE sometimes faces a difficult trade-off between methodological rigour on the one hand and concerns for practical feasibility and immediate usefulness on the other. If TBE appears in a process that resembles Figure 1, demands on methodological rigour may have high priority. On the other hand, if it plays a more dynamic, formative role as in Figure 2, immediate usefulness may be given a relatively higher priority.

Another complication is the diversity of interests and political pressures from various stakeholders, which may be difficult to reconcile in a theory-making process. It might be difficult for TBE to deliver a constellation of programme theories, which satisfy both external and internal stakeholders, international sponsors as well as local actors. It is only by trying, under specific circumstances, that the true value of TBE can be known.

CONCLUSION

Recent trends in TBE point towards more participation of stakeholders in the theory-making process and towards more flexible epistemologies. This development allows for more attention to contextual

variations in the effectiveness of interventions and more participation of local evaluators and thinkers in the epistemological domains of the evaluation process. This hybrid approach includes elements of participation that resonate with cultural and philosophical traits undergirding the role of collective knowledge construction and decision-making in African contexts, at the same time as TBE remains committed to continuous confrontation of the constructed theories with empirical findings. The proposed innovation of TBE may have broader implications and serve as a promising inspiration for better evaluation practices in African contexts, given that existing research has demonstrated a need for such visions.

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Authors' contributions

N.P.M. and P.D-L. jointly made a substantial contribution to the conception and design of this work. N.P.M. drafted the manuscript, P.D-L. further drafted and critically revised it for important intellectual content. Both N.P.M. and P.D-L. approved the final version to be published.

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Chapter 10

Operationalizing the Swahili Evaluation Approach

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ABSTRACT

The Swahili Evaluation Approach (SEA) is a culturally grounded and participatory framework incorporating indigenous wisdom from Swahili proverbs into development evaluation. Unlike standardized and externally imposed methodologies, SEA promotes inclusivity, relational ethics, and community-driven inquiry. Grounded in strong ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological principles, it emphasizes experiential knowledge, collective learning, and ethical responsibility. This paper outlines the philosophical foundations of the SEA, provides a detailed implementation guide, and addresses ethical considerations. Through participatory engagement, culturally relevant data collection, and the powerful tool of storytelling, SEA enhances the credibility, relevance, and utility of evaluations within African contexts. Its focus on ethical responsibility and accountability builds trust among stakeholders and promotes more equitable and contextually responsive evaluation practices.

Keywords: Swahili Evaluation Approach (SEA), Indigenous Evaluation Methods, Culturally Responsive Evaluation Methodologies, Community-Driven Inquiry, Ethical and Relational Accountability, Decolonizing Evaluation Practices, African-Rooted Evaluation Methodologies

INTRODUCTION

The Swahili Evaluation Approach (SEA) is rooted in the wisdom and knowledge systems of the Indigenous people of Tanzania. It was developed by tapping into the collective wisdom, worldviews, and ethical principles of Swahili proverbs. These proverbs provide practical insights applicable to various aspects of development evaluation practices. The process of deriving evaluative insights from Swahili proverbs is outlined in Mazigo et al. (2024), while the development of the Swahili Evaluation Approach is detailed in Mazigo (2024).

The SEA enhances development evaluations by incorporating locally relevant paradigms derived from Swahili proverbs, fostering people-centric and participatory evaluation processes. Through its ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological tenets, SEA provides a culturally embedded and holistic approach to assessing development interventions in an African context.

The SEA stands out as a culturally embedded and community-driven evaluation framework that offers significant advantages over conventional evaluation models. Conventional evaluation approaches often apply standardized methodologies that may not fully capture the complexities of diverse cultural contexts (Patton, 2015). SEA integrates indigenous knowledge systems and participatory methodologies to ensure that evaluations are meaningful, inclusive, and contextually relevant (Chilisa, 2012).

Unlike many Western-centric evaluation models, SEA is rooted in the wisdom and lived experiences of African communities. It leverages wisdom in Swahili proverbs and traditional knowledge systems to guide the evaluation process, ensuring that it resonates with local values and realities (Smith, 2021).

Conventional evaluation methods often rely on external evaluators who impose predefined frameworks. In contrast, SEA prioritizes the active involvement of stakeholders, ensuring that local voices shape the evaluation process and outcomes (Mertens, 2009).

Conventional evaluation models frequently emphasize quantitative data and standardized indicators. SEA integrates qualitative insights,

storytelling, and communal dialogue, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the evaluand (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

Unlike rigid conventional evaluation models, SEA accommodates contextual variations and allows for flexible, iterative learning processes that adapt to the evolving needs of the community (Tarsilla, 2020).

SEA embeds ethical considerations, emphasizing respect, inclusivity, and mutual accountability, ensuring that the evaluation process aligns with the moral and social values of the community (Chouinard & Cram, 2020).

This paper elaborates on how the SEA can be operationalized in evaluation settings. Specifically, it (i) outlines the fundamental philosophical principles of the SEA to establish a theoretical foundation for its application; (ii) presents a step-by-step framework for implementing the SEA-based evaluations, emphasizing participatory engagement, culturally relevant data collection methods, and collaborative knowledge creation; and (iii) examines the ethical dimensions of SEA, including transparency, inclusivity, respect for indigenous knowledge, and accountability to local stakeholders.

PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE SEA

The SEA is guided by four fundamental philosophical beliefs that shape its framework:

Ontological Belief: Nature of the Evaluand

The SEA asserts that the evaluand, which refers to the evaluated entity, is a singular yet multifaceted phenomenon that must be understood through lived experiences. This idea is reflected in the proverbs *Nyumba usiyolala ndani huijui hila yake* (You cannot know the defects of a house you have not slept in) and *Kitanda usicho kilalia hujui kunguni wake* (You cannot know the bugs of a bed that you have not lain on).

To appreciate the full range of characteristics and potential issues associated with phenomena like a house or a bed, they must be personally experienced. The intricacies of these experiences may differ

based on various factors, such as time of day, season, and context. For instance, individuals inhabiting the same house might perceive and document its defects differently across seasonal changes, noting that a rainy season may reveal problems like leaks or dampness that do not manifest during dry weather. In the case of a bed, a person who uses it during the day may not encounter bedbugs, whereas someone who sleeps on the same bed at night might face infestations since these pests are typically nocturnal.

This discrepancy underscores the necessity of incorporating a wide array of stakeholder perspectives to uncover the complex realities of the evaluated intervention. Each stakeholder brings their own experiences and insights, contributing to a fuller understanding of the situation. This active involvement of stakeholders is not just a process but a recognition of their importance and a key to a successful evaluation.

Moreover, SEA acknowledges that stakeholders interpret the evaluand through unique viewpoints influenced by their distinct roles, backgrounds, and cultural contexts. This diverse perspective is vital to the evaluation process, as it enriches the analysis and fosters a deeper comprehension of the intervention. By prioritizing inclusivity and comprehensiveness, the SEA ensures that all relevant voices are heard, ultimately leading to a more accurate and nuanced evaluation of the phenomenon in question.

Epistemological Belief: Knowledge Generation

The SEA believes that an in-depth understanding of the evaluand—whether a program, project, or policy—can best be achieved by fostering close, trusted relationships with individuals with direct experience. This principle is powerfully illustrated by the proverbs *Matundu ya nyumba ayafahamu mwenye nyumba* (Only the house owner knows the holes in the house) and *Kitanda usicho kilalia hujui kunguni wake* (You cannot know the bugs in a bed that you have not lain on). These sayings underscore the vital necessity of engaging with stakeholders personally, as their lived experiences provide insights often overlooked in

traditional evaluation methodologies and make them feel engaged and integral to the process.

To implement this principle, SEA prioritizes participatory and experiential learning processes during evaluations. This approach makes the evaluation process more inclusive by involving stakeholders in the data collection and analysis and encourages them to feel an integral part of it. By actively involving them, the SEA fosters a sense of ownership and accountability, enhancing the findings' overall quality and richness.

Moreover, SEA significantly emphasizes incorporating indigenous knowledge systems and community wisdom into the evaluation process. It advocates for evaluators to recognize and utilize these invaluable sources of knowledge, which often contain deep insights and cultural context that formal data collection methods may miss. Instead of relying exclusively on quantitative data or structured surveys, SEA promotes a diverse array of methods, including storytelling, community dialogues, and oral traditions, as legitimate and enriching ways to capture the complexities of the evaluand.

By valuing indigenous knowledge, SEA not only enhances the credibility of the evaluation but also fosters an environment where stakeholders feel respected and appreciated for their unique perspectives. They are recognized as experts in their own right, contributing to a more holistic understanding of the issues at hand. This comprehensive approach ultimately leads to more relevant and actionable evaluation outcomes reflecting the community's needs and values. Moreover, including indigenous knowledge can provide a more thorough and nuanced understanding of the evaluation, thereby enhancing its credibility.

Axiological Belief: Ethical and Value Considerations

The SEA strongly emphasizes core ethical values, including respect, cooperation, solidarity, and humility. The wisdom in the proverb *Shughuli ni watu* (A social event needs people) underscores the inherently collective nature of evaluation, necessitating inclusivity, and

relational ethics. It is essential to ensure the active and meaningful involvement of all eligible stakeholders in the evaluation process. By valuing Indigenous knowledge systems and perspectives, the evaluation process becomes more holistic and reflective of diverse experiences and insights.

Creating a culture of mutual respect and trust between evaluators and participants is vital for the success of any evaluation. The SEA advocates for a role reversal, where evaluators act as facilitators rather than authoritative figures. This shift empowers local stakeholders to take ownership of the evaluation process, allowing them to contribute their unique perspectives and expertise.

In addition to these relational aspects, ethical considerations are crucial in SEA-driven evaluations. Key elements such as informed consent, which ensures participants understand their rights and the nature of the evaluation, confidentiality to protect personal information, and cultural sensitivity to respect the values and traditions of diverse communities must be prioritized throughout the process. By adhering to these ethical guidelines, evaluators can build trust and ensure that the evaluation is respectful and effective in meeting the needs of all stakeholders involved. This emphasis on ethics is not just a formality but a commitment to the well-being and respect of all involved.

Methodological Belief: Data Collection and Inquiry

The SEA, emphasizing systematic and participatory inquiries, co-creation, and validation of knowledge, plays a pivotal role in promoting credible information. It establishes methodological rigor in systematic inquiries and objective assessment of various aspects of the evaluand, thereby enlightening the evaluation process.

The wisdom in the proverb *Aingiaye baharini huogelea* (Whoever enters the sea must swim) conveys a crucial lesson about possessing adequate competencies before undertaking new challenges. In this context, participants must develop technical and social skills to engage in systematic inquiries. This entails understanding the subject being evaluated and appreciating its complexities and nuances.

Technical competencies form the bedrock of thorough inquiries and objective assessments. The wisdom in the proverb *Asiyeuliza hanalo aji-funzalo* (One who does not ask, does not learn) underscores the importance of inquiry skills, such as asking insightful and probing questions. These skills, along with critical thinking and fact-checking, are crucial for verifying information and ensuring that conclusions are based on solid evidence.

Additionally, the proverb *Chanda chema huvikwa pete* (A pleasant finger gets honored with a ring) underscores the significance of valuing skills in assessing merit and worth. This involves establishing criteria and standards that enable individuals to judge performance and contributions objectively, therefore allowing for recognition and reward based on informed evaluations. Together, these proverbs illustrate the multifaceted nature of the competencies required for effective participation in any evaluative process.

Process integrity is a key aspect of the SEA, covering the selection and management of participants. As credible information is generated from credible sources, the lead of the evaluation process must select and involve people who have experienced the evaluand. This is emphasized in the proverbs *Matundu ya nyumba ayafahamu mwenye nyumba* (The house owner knows holes in the house), *Nyumba usiyolala ndani huijui hila yake* (You cannot know the defects of a house you have not slept in) and *Kitanda usicho kilalia hujui kunguni wake* (You cannot know the bugs of a bed that you have not lain on). Process integrity ensures that the evaluation process is transparent, inclusive, and respectful of all stakeholders, thereby enhancing the credibility and reliability of the evaluation results.

Additionally, SEA encourages the triangulation of data sources to enhance validity and reliability. Triangulation involves integrating qualitative narratives with quantitative data, ensuring that findings are both empirically sound and contextually relevant. Using multiple data sources, evaluators can cross-verify their findings, thereby increasing the credibility and robustness of the evaluation results. Evaluators are also encouraged to engage in reflective practices, continuously refining their methodologies based on stakeholder feedback and evolving insights from the field.

OPERATIONALIZING SEA IN EVALUATION PRACTICES

Meaning and Aspects of Evaluation

The wisdom in Swahili proverbs serves as a valuable foundation for understanding evaluation as an inclusive and methodical process of (i) inquiry and learning, (ii) objective and impartial assessments, and (iii) evidence-based evaluation.

Inquiry and Learning: The wisdom in the proverb *Kuuliza si ujinga* (Asking is not foolish) highlights the critical importance of inquiry in the evaluation process. It underscores the necessity for evaluators to actively seek various perspectives from stakeholders, including community members, project beneficiaries, and other relevant parties. This practice enriches the evaluators' understanding of the complexities surrounding development interventions and fosters an environment of continuous learning. By engaging with diverse voices, evaluators can gain insights that challenge their assumptions and enhance the overall quality of the evaluation.

Objectivity and Impartiality: The wisdom in the proverb *Mlenga jiwe kundini, hajui limpataye* (He who throws a stone in a crowd does not know whom it hits) is a caution against evaluation bias. This proverb emphasizes maintaining neutrality and fairness throughout the assessment process. Evaluators must be vigilant in avoiding favoritism or prejudice, as these can distort findings and lead to misinterpretations. Adopting objective methodologies and ensuring diverse stakeholder representation in the evaluation team are practical ways to uphold these values, ultimately leading to a more credible and trustworthy evaluation process.

Evidence-Based Assessment: The wisdom in the proverb *Dalili ya mvua ni mawingu* (The sign of rain clouds) speaks to the essential role of reliable indicators and empirical data in decision-making. This wisdom highlights the importance of grounding evaluations in evidence

rather than assumptions or anecdotal accounts. By employing rigorous data collection methods—such as surveys, interviews, and focus groups—evaluators can gather concrete evidence reflecting the impact of development interventions. Utilizing sound evidence-based practices enhances the accuracy of evaluations and ensures that conclusions drawn will support informed decision-making and lead to actionable recommendations.

Incorporating the lessons from these proverbs into the evaluation process enriches understanding and promotes a more holistic approach to assessing the effectiveness of development initiatives.

Evaluation Purposes and Participants

Swahili wisdom identifies three primary evaluation purposes, each tied to specific practices that shape the SEA framework.

Evaluating Performance in Keeping Promises: A core purpose of evaluation is to assess whether development projects fulfill their commitments. The wisdom in the proverb *Ahadi ni deni* (A promise is like a debt) is a guiding principle for accountability in the SEA. Evaluators should examine whether implementers have delivered their promises concerning resource allocation, activity execution, and intended outcomes. This approach ensures that stakeholders remain accountable for their commitments and that projects align with their original objectives.

Identifying Preventive and Corrective Measures: Development interventions often encounter challenges that require timely interventions. The wisdom in the proverb *Hila ya kikwapa kunuka pasipo kidonda* (The armpit's trick is smelling bad despite not having a wound) suggests continuous monitoring to detect and address potential failures before they escalate. SEA promotes real-time evaluations that allow for adaptive management and mid-course corrections, ensuring that development initiatives remain effective and responsive to changing conditions.

Co-Learning and Co-Producing the History of Development Projects: Swahili wisdom sees evaluation as a collaborative learning

and co-development process where communities actively shape and preserve the history of development projects. The proverb *Pekee pekee hauwezi tuna historia* (One person cannot produce history) underscores the importance of collective knowledge creation and shared experiences in evaluation. SEA integrates traditional storytelling, communal dialogues, and participatory engagements to ensure that development evaluations reflect the lived realities and aspirations of all stakeholders. This approach guarantees that diverse voices, perspectives, and contextual insights contribute meaningfully to the documentation, interpretation, and learning from development interventions.

Swahili wisdom categorizes evaluation participants into two main groups: **local stakeholders** (beneficiaries, implementers, and funders) and **external evaluators**. Each group has distinct rights and responsibilities.

Local Stakeholders have the right to participate in the evaluation process, access information, and be fairly represented in findings. The wisdom in the proverb *Matundu ya nyumba ayafahamu mwenye nyumba* (The house owner knows the holes in the house) emphasizes that those directly affected by projects must be actively involved. **External Evaluators** have the right to conduct evaluations independently while ensuring ethical community engagement. The wisdom in the proverb *Mgeni njoo mwenyeji apone* (Let the guest come so that the host benefits) highlights the role of evaluators in supporting community learning rather than imposing external judgments.

Local Stakeholders must provide honest feedback, engage actively in the process, and collaborate with evaluators to ensure accurate assessments. **External Evaluators** are responsible for facilitating inclusive participation, respecting local knowledge, and ensuring transparent reporting. The wisdom in the proverb *Penye wengi hapaharibiki neno* (Where there are many people, nothing goes wrong) underscores the importance of collective decision-making in evaluation.

Steps for Conducting SEA-Based Evaluations

Swahili proverbs encapsulate the values of honesty, accountability, transparency, and collective knowledge creation, which are essential to the evaluation process. SEA ensures that evaluation is not merely a technical activity but a socially embedded practice that reflects the values and aspirations of the people it serves. This section outlines the key steps in conducting an evaluation using SEA, demonstrating how indigenous wisdom can be harnessed to improve the effectiveness of development interventions.

Stakeholder Identification and Engagement: The first step in conducting an evaluation using SEA is to identify and engage stakeholders. The wisdom in the proverb *Shughuli ni watu* (A social event needs people) underscores the importance of involving all relevant actors in the evaluation process. This step is not just a formality, but a crucial part of the evaluation process, making stakeholders, including beneficiaries, project implementers, funders, and community leaders, feel integral to the process.

In SEA, stakeholder engagement is not passive but involves active collaboration, dialogue, and mutual learning. This ensures that the perspectives and experiences of local communities shape the evaluation from the outset. Special efforts must be made to include marginalized voices, such as women, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities, recognizing that development interventions often impact different groups in varied ways.

The wisdom in the proverb *Matundu ya nyumba ayafahamu mwenye nyumba* (The house owner knows the holes in the house) emphasizes that those who directly experience development projects should have a leading role in the evaluation. This step establishes the foundation for an inclusive, culturally sensitive, and community-driven evaluation.

Defining the Scope and Purpose of the Evaluation: After engaging stakeholders, the next critical step is to clearly define the scope and purpose of the evaluation. The wisdom in the proverb *Ahadi ni deni* (A promise is like a debt) underscores the importance of accountability

in development initiatives. Effective evaluations are essential for determining whether project implementers have upheld their commitments and whether the interventions have produced the expected outcomes.

In this phase, evaluators should organize and facilitate community discussions to collaboratively identify key evaluation questions. These questions should be carefully crafted to reflect the community's needs, aspirations, and expectations, ensuring the evaluation is relevant and responsive to the stakeholders' context. Engaging with community members fosters ownership of the evaluation process and increases the likelihood of utilizing the findings.

Defining the scope also involves making strategic decisions about the evaluation type—formative, summative, or real-time monitoring. This selection should be based on a thorough understanding of the project's current stage and unique objectives. Formative evaluations might focus on improving ongoing projects, summative evaluations assess the overall effectiveness after completion, and real-time monitoring provides immediate insights to inform ongoing implementation. By clearly determining these factors, evaluators can ensure a comprehensive approach that addresses the interventions' immediate and long-term impact.

Selecting Appropriate Evaluation Methods: To ensure that evaluations are credible and contextually relevant, SEA highlights the necessity of employing culturally appropriate methods for data collection. This approach recognizes the diverse cultural landscapes in which projects operate and the importance of respecting local customs and values.

Moreover, SEA strongly advocates for integrating qualitative and quantitative research methods. Qualitative methods, such as interviews and focus groups, provide rich, in-depth insights into participant experiences and perspectives. Meanwhile, quantitative methods, including surveys and statistical analysis, enable evaluators to measure outcomes systematically and objectively. By combining these methodologies, SEA aims to deliver a comprehensive assessment that captures the numerical data and the nuanced human experiences that contribute

to a project's success, providing a thorough understanding of the project's impact.

The wisdom in the proverb *Dalili ya mvua ni mawingu* (The sign of rain clouds) underscores the need for using reliable indicators when assessing project effectiveness. This wisdom reminds evaluators that just as clouds signal impending rain, specific indicators can accurately reflect the outcomes and impact of a project. By using reliable indicators, evaluators can have confidence in the accuracy and validity of their assessments, ensuring a robust evaluation process.

Data Collection and Collaborative Learning: Data collection in the SEA transcends traditional information gathering; it embodies an interactive learning journey that actively engages all parties involved. The wisdom in the proverb *Kuuliza si ujinga* (Asking is not foolish) highlights the importance of inquiry and questioning as vital components in comprehending development interventions and their impacts.

During this critical phase, evaluators foster an environment conducive to open discussions, reflective dialogues, and storytelling sessions. These gatherings encourage stakeholders—such as community members, beneficiaries, and project staff—to share their personal experiences, insights, and perceptions regarding the interventions. Storytelling is not just a means of sharing but a powerful tool that enriches qualitative data, making each stakeholder feel the value of their contributions. Such narratives deepen the understanding of the social context and the challenges participants face.

Moreover, it is imperative to prioritize ethical considerations throughout the data collection. This includes obtaining informed consent from all participants and ensuring their understanding of the study's purpose and procedures. Equally important is maintaining confidentiality, which is crucial for safeguarding participants' identities and sensitive information. Additionally, evaluators must demonstrate cultural sensitivity and respect diverse backgrounds, traditions, and values within the group. Integrating these ethical practices makes the data collection process more trustworthy and yields more nuanced insights, making the audience feel secure and respected.

Data Analysis and Interpretation: The SEA acknowledges that different stakeholders may interpret the findings differently when analyzing evaluation data. This diversity in understanding is encapsulated in the proverb *Haramu yako halali kwa mwenzi* (What is wrong for you may be right for someone else). This saying underscores the necessity of valuing multiple perspectives when interpreting data, highlighting the complex nature of human experiences and beliefs.

To address these variations in interpretation, SEA actively promotes a collaborative approach to data analysis. This involves organizing community validation meetings where stakeholders can discuss the findings. During these meetings, participants are encouraged to share their insights, experiences, and cultural contexts, which helps to ensure that interpretations align with local realities. By facilitating open dialogue, SEA fosters an environment in which stakeholders feel valued and respected for their perspectives, empowering them to participate in shaping the conclusions drawn from the data. This co-creation of understanding ensures that insights are relevant and actionable, ultimately leading to more effective and contextually appropriate decision-making.

Co-Developing the History of the Project: Evaluation is a multifaceted process that goes beyond merely assessing the impact of development initiatives; it also plays a crucial role in documenting the history and deriving valuable lessons from these projects. The wisdom in the proverb *Pekee pekee hauwezi tuna historia* (One person cannot produce history) serves as a poignant reminder that the creation of history is inherently collaborative and requires active engagement from the community.

To effectively capture this collaborative spirit, the SEA employs a combination of storytelling, oral history documentation, and participatory reflections. This transformative methodology ensures that evaluations not only highlight quantitative outcomes but also encompass the rich, qualitative narratives of the stakeholders involved. By integrating these diverse perspectives, the SEA enriches the evaluation process, transforming it into a dynamic learning tool that fosters more profound

understanding and inspires hope for future development efforts. This comprehensive approach allows for a more nuanced appreciation of the project's impact, ultimately contributing to more effective and responsive development practices.

Reporting and Dissemination of Findings: To maximize the impact of evaluation findings, it is essential to share them in ways that meaningfully benefit all stakeholders involved. The wisdom in the proverb *Mgeni njoo mwenyeji apone* (Let the guest come so that the host benefits) underscores the principle of mutual benefit. This highlights that evaluations should not only assess programs but also serve as a powerful tool for empowering communities and driving forward meaningful and lasting change.

The SEA strongly advocates for diverse dissemination formats tailored to different audiences. For instance, community presentations that engage residents can facilitate direct dialogue and feedback, whereas visual storytelling—using images, infographics, and videos—can capture attention and convey complex information easily. However, a key aspect of this diversity is the use of local languages in producing reports, which ensures inclusivity and accessibility, allowing stakeholders from various backgrounds to fully understand and act upon the findings. These strategies can transform evaluation outcomes into actionable insights that resonate with and benefit the community.

Applying Lessons and Ensuring Accountability: Finally, the SEA ensures that evaluations identify issues and lead to actionable corrective measures and long-term accountability. The wisdom in the proverb *Hila ya kikwapa kunuka pasipo kidonda* (The armpit's trick is smelling bad despite not having a wound) serves as a poignant reminder of the dangers of neglecting underlying problems until they escalate into crises. As such, evaluations must produce clear, actionable recommendations that stakeholders can implement to bolster the effectiveness of future development initiatives.

The actual value of an evaluation lies in its capacity to inspire meaningful action. The SEA emphasizes the necessity of converting

recommendations into concrete steps that improve outcomes in subsequent interventions. The insight offered by the proverb draws attention to the risks associated with ignoring early warning signs of failure or inefficiency; therefore, evaluators should facilitate open discussions about how the findings can be leveraged for ongoing learning and enhancement.

Establishing robust mechanisms for ongoing feedback and adaptive learning is essential to fostering a culture of continuous improvement. This approach ensures that evaluations are not viewed as isolated events but rather as integral components of an iterative process aimed at growth and refinement. By embedding evaluation into the organizational culture, stakeholders can better navigate challenges and enhance their effectiveness in achieving development goals.

ETHICAL VALUES AND PRINCIPLES IN SEA

Honesty and Integrity

Honesty and integrity are fundamental principles in SEA that guide evaluators to ensure transparency, reliability, and ethical rigor. The wisdom in the proverb *Msema kweli ni mpenzi wa Mungu* (A truth-teller is God's beloved) reinforces the value of truthfulness in evaluation processes. Evaluators must present findings impartially, free from external pressures or biases that may compromise the credibility of the evaluation. By fostering an environment of openness and honesty, evaluations can serve as effective tools for learning, accountability, and improvement. Furthermore, integrity demands that evaluators acknowledge limitations in their methods, report conflicting evidence, and ensure their conclusions are based on verifiable data.

Respect for Community Knowledge

Respect for community knowledge is a core value in SEA, emphasizing the importance of acknowledging and integrating indigenous wisdom into evaluation practices. Wisdom in the proverb *Heshima si utumwa*

(Respect is not servitude) signifies that valuing local perspectives is not an act of deference but rather a necessary component of ethical and effective evaluation. Indigenous knowledge systems, passed down through generations, provide rich contextual insights that may not be captured through conventional evaluation methods. Evaluators must actively engage with local communities, listen to their narratives, and incorporate their perspectives into the evaluation framework to ensure culturally grounded and meaningful outcomes.

Accountability to Stakeholders

Accountability is a critical pillar of SEA, ensuring that evaluation processes and outcomes serve the interests of all stakeholders. Wisdom in the proverb *Ahadi ni deni* (A promise is a debt) highlights the obligation of external evaluators to uphold commitments made to both funders and local communities. Accountability requires evaluators to maintain transparency throughout the evaluation process, involve stakeholders in decision-making, and ensure that findings are used to enhance programs rather than merely fulfill reporting requirements. By fostering shared responsibility, SEA strengthens trust and encourages continuous improvement in development initiatives.

Inclusivity and Representation

Inclusivity is at the heart of SEA, ensuring that diverse voices, especially those of marginalized groups, are represented in evaluation processes. Wisdom in the proverb *Penye wengi hapaharibiki neno* (Where there are many people, nothing goes wrong) underscores the collective wisdom that emerges when multiple perspectives are considered. Effective evaluations must engage individuals across different social strata, including women, youth, persons with disabilities, and indigenous communities. This participatory approach ensures that evaluations accurately reflect the realities of those affected by development interventions and lead to more equitable and impactful outcomes.

Reciprocity and Mutual Benefit

SEA upholds the principle that evaluation should not be an extractive process but one that brings mutual benefits to both evaluators and communities. Wisdom in the proverb *Mgeni njoo mwenyeji apone* (Let the guest come so that the host benefits) reflects the importance of ensuring that evaluations contribute positively to local development. Evaluators should share knowledge, build community capacity, and facilitate learning opportunities that empower local stakeholders. By promoting reciprocity, evaluations can foster long-term partnerships and encourage sustained improvements in development initiatives.

Confidentiality and Data Protection

Confidentiality is a fundamental ethical consideration in SEA, ensuring that the rights and privacy of participants are safeguarded throughout the evaluation process. Wisdom in the proverb *Nyumba yenye siri haivunjiki* (A house with secrets does not collapse) highlights the need to handle sensitive information with care. Evaluators must establish clear data protection measures, secure informed consent from participants, and anonymize responses where necessary. By upholding confidentiality standards, SEA fosters trust between evaluators and communities, encouraging openness and honest participation in the evaluation process.

Cultural Sensitivity and Adaptability

Cultural sensitivity and adaptability are essential in SEA, ensuring that evaluations respect and respond to local customs, values, and social norms. Wisdom in the proverb *Samaki mkunje angali mbichi* (Bend the fish while it is still fresh) emphasizes the importance of being flexible and responsive to contextual needs. Evaluators should approach each community with humility, engage in culturally appropriate ways, and adapt methodologies to align with indigenous ways of knowing. By embracing cultural sensitivity, SEA enhances the relevance and effectiveness of evaluations, making them more impactful and sustainable in diverse settings.

CONCLUSION

The Swahili Evaluation Approach (SEA) offers a transformative, culturally grounded framework for assessing development interventions. Drawing from Swahili proverbs and indigenous knowledge, SEA bridges traditional wisdom with contemporary development evaluation practices, fostering a people-centered, participatory, and ethical approach. It challenges conventional, often externally imposed, evaluation models by emphasizing relational ethics, stakeholder inclusivity, and the co-creation of knowledge.

SEA's ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological principles establish a holistic foundation for evaluation. It acknowledges that knowledge is best generated through lived experiences, embraces multiple perspectives, and prioritizes ethical values such as respect, accountability, and reciprocity. Through its participatory methodologies, SEA ensures that evaluations are not only methodologically rigorous but also contextually relevant, empowering local stakeholders and communities to take ownership of development assessments and decision-making.

Operationalizing SEA requires evaluators to integrate indigenous wisdom with systematic inquiry, and blending qualitative insights with quantitative rigor. Its ethical foundation—built on honesty, transparency, and inclusivity—ensures that evaluations foster mutual learning rather than merely extract information. By centering local voices and valuing diverse perspectives, SEA offers a decolonized approach that challenges the dominance of Western evaluation paradigms and contributes to a more just and equitable development practice.

As the global evaluation community seeks more contextually relevant and culturally responsive models, SEA provides a compelling alternative that is both innovative and deeply rooted in African traditions. Its continued application and adaptation can further refine its methodologies, expand its influence, and enrich the broader discourse on decolonizing and indigenizing evaluation. By embracing SEA,

evaluators and development practitioners can foster more meaningful and effective interventions that reflect the needs and aspirations of their communities.

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Case Studies

Chapter 11

A Case Study of ‘Made in Africa’ Evaluation: A review of the growth of Monitoring and Evaluation in South Africa

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ABSTRACT

This chapter offers a contribution to understanding the development of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in South Africa as a distinctive “Made in Africa” evaluation case study. It chronicles the growth of M&E in South Africa through three interconnected lenses: as a profession, as an industry, and as a governance tool within the unique South African context. What makes this work particularly valuable as a case study of African-centered evaluation is its detailed documentation of how South Africa’s M&E landscape evolved in response to local conditions rather than simply importing Western evaluation models. The paper shows how South Africa’s history of apartheid, its transition to democracy in 1994, and subsequent development challenges have shaped a unique evaluation ecosystem that balances international standards with local needs and perspectives.

The chapter highlights how the indigenous evolution of M&E in South Africa reflects the nation’s specific governance priorities, including the need to address historical inequities, improve service delivery to previously disadvantaged populations, and establish accountability

mechanisms in a post-apartheid context. This makes the chapter an excellent case study of how evaluation systems can develop organically within the African continent, responding to local sociopolitical circumstances while still engaging with global evaluation standards and practices.

South Africa is one several African countries with an official ministry responsible for monitoring and evaluation (M&E). Some of the other countries include Ghana, Kenya, Benin and Uganda. The development of M&E in South Africa has been stymied in part by its interdisciplinary nature, trying to find roots within historically a very discipline-based higher education system. Government agencies and Non-government organisations (NGOs) often using international donor funds for their own projects, have been engaged in outsourcing evaluation studies, and currently all government departments have established their own M&E units. There are statutory bodies such as the Public Service Commission (PSC) and the Department for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) with the responsibility to monitor and evaluate the government's service delivery and performance.

The South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association (SAMEA), established in 2005, draws together M&E practitioners, trainers in M&E, development agencies as well as government officials at its biennial conferences and sustains a vibrant community via its listserv – SAMEATalk. This chapter reviews the growth of monitoring and evaluation in South Africa and reflects on the current or prominent nature of M&E in this country. It deliberates about M&E developing into a profession, its growth as an industry or business and its increasing adoption as a governance tool for development in South Africa. The paper concludes with some critical reflections on the growth of M&E in South Africa.

INTRODUCTION

'Programme evaluation', 'evaluation research' or in its most recent usage 'monitoring and evaluation (M&E)' as a distinct discipline and a field of study was regarded 15 years ago as relatively new in South

Africa (Louw, 1998; Potter, 1999; Potter and Kruger, 2001; Mouton, 2010). Its development in South Africa was stymied in part by the interdisciplinary nature of monitoring and evaluation, trying to find roots within historically, a very discipline based higher education system. Monitoring and evaluation practice in South Africa has, within this time-frame, a history of being conducted by academics and professionals trained in, among others, Psychology, Sociology, Economics, Education, Philosophy or Political Science. Over the last ten years however, there has been a huge increase in the number, scope and quality of evaluations conducted in this country. Government agencies and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), often using international donor funds for their own projects have been engaged in outsourcing evaluation studies and currently all government departments, have established their own monitoring and evaluation units.

The Public Service Commission (PSC) and the Department for Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) the latter based in the Presidency and headed by a Minister, are statutory institutions charged with the task of monitoring and evaluating government delivery and performance. The government has set itself strategic objectives against which delivery and performance should be assessed. It intends doing this by carrying out periodic evaluations of the impact of government's work and to use the results of M&E to promote evidence-based policy making. In addition, the lack of skills in the area of evaluation research is being addressed by the offering of dedicated courses at various higher education institutions. Several new locally produced, social science research textbooks, used by undergraduate and post-graduate students, have, included in them, chapters on programme evaluation. These developments have contributed to the growth of a young but vibrant culture of evaluation research in South Africa.

Amidst all of this the launch of the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association (SAMEA) in 2005 had drawn together more than 400 members who regularly attend its biennial conferences. The SAMEA Board services approximately 600 email accounts on its listserv, SAMEATALK. It is however in the Government sector where SAMEA had drawn a large number of new members. These government officials

actively participate in their own M&E Learning network, coordinated by the DPME, where they target M&E staff and government officials engaged in associated fields.

It is in this context that this review of the growth of Monitoring and Evaluation in South Africa reflects on the current or dominant nature of M&E in this country. Has it become a profession? Is it primarily an industry? Or is it essentially a management tool for government and other agencies? What follows is a brief historical overview of the prominent developments in the field of M&E in South Africa over the last ten to fifteen years. An attempt is made to cluster some of the developments into sectors such as the professionalisation of M&E, its development as an industry and the government utilisation of M&E as a governance tool. The paper concludes with an analysis of the utility value of the growth of Monitoring and Evaluation in South Africa.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The development of the field of evaluation research or programme evaluation in South Africa has been a comparatively recent phenomenon. Potter and Kruger (2001) illustrate this assertion with a 1998 PsychLIT database (Silverplatter International N.V.) search for references from 1974 to 1997 that produced only “fifteen articles and one book chapter that were indexed under ‘programme evaluation’ and ‘Africa’, out of a total of 4 721 articles and books that were indexed under ‘programme evaluation’ (p. 192). Eleven of the articles, including the book chapter were from South Africa, representing less than half a percent of the total available on that database. Potter (1999) states that “evaluation research was relatively unknown until the early 1980s, and it is only in the 1990s that local scientists have demonstrated increased interest in the area” (p. 225). Interestingly however, De Vos (1998) refers to an official document, Circular No. 6 of 1987, issued by the then Department of Health Services and Welfare, Administration: House of Assembly. According to De Vos, this initiative formally introduced the concepts of ‘programme development and evaluation’ in South Africa but these

were limited initially only to the white population in the country. This piece of information suggests part of the reason for the slow development of programme evaluation in South Africa as well as the particular political and selective use of social science research during the Apartheid era, that is, pre-1994.

There seems to be general agreement (Potter and Kruger, 2001, Swilling and Russel, 2002, Mouton, 2010) that it is within the Non-government (NGO) sector that programme evaluation first emerged as a practice. Potter (1999) reported that since the 1970s, an estimated R6 billion of overseas and local funding had been used by various NGOs to engage in development projects in various sectors of society. As a requirement for further funding, project activities and outcomes had to be evaluated. The contribution of NGO development work in South Africa has not been insignificant. With the existence of so many 'unmet' needs in the country, NGOs have been able to offer products and services, where the government was unable, and before 1994, unwilling to deliver them. The scope and reach of NGO work in South Africa is impossible to describe but it is common knowledge that NGOs worked and continue to do so in every sphere and sectors of society. NGOs generally operate on a small scale within a particular geographic area and with specific interest groups. The sectors include, among others, health, welfare, education, entrepreneurship, community development, and skills training.

Much has changed since then as all work completed by government and NGOs, especially those funded by overseas donors, have to be evaluated currently. The NGO character has also evolved over the years. Most of these types of organisations, established before 1994, elected or chose to be non-government so as to oppose the Apartheid government. Post -1994 however, many of them worked with or were funded by the government and had to apply for non-profit status. With their not-for-profit status, these organisations are currently also referred to as Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs). The NPO moniker also reflects a 'depoliticised' (Swilling & Russel, 2002) character of the new relationship between the government and these organisations.

It is in this sector that evaluation-like activities first emerged and where international donor-funding was used to assess development work. Mouton (2010) attributes part of this initial impetus toward monitoring and evaluation to the rising global accountability movement. There was a more relaxed and flexible relationship between donors and recipient agencies in South Africa before 1994, fueled partly by a shared and growing anti-apartheid sentiment. In most cases, NGOs were only required to provide financial audit and annual reports to qualify for further support. When evaluations did occur, they were conducted by external evaluators. This scenario evolved in the 1980s when the Kellogg Foundation insisted on evaluations and the use of local evaluators and the USAID, DFID, the Netherlands' and other funding agencies started implementing stringent accountability measures to their grants. The German Funding agency, GTZ went as far as to introduce its own logical framework, ZOPP (Zielorientierte Projektplanung or translated as Objectives-oriented Project Planing) as a mechanism for good governance, monitoring and evaluation.

According to Lodge (1999) the then South African government, charged with the accusation of being largely ineffective in reaching the poor, had also embarked on numerous interventions since 1994. Primary health care enabled that administration to provide basic health care to millions of people. They also initiated a land reform programme that settled in excess of 68,000 families on more than 300,000 hectares of farming land. It was also within the Department of Land Affairs (DLA) where the first Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate was established in 1995 (Naidoo, 2012). In other spheres, cheap housing had been made available for millions of families and clean water, via standpipes, became available for rural people who previously either used ground water or bought their drinking supplies from trucks (Lodge, 1999). What had been difficult to ascertain for that government, was the relative success of these policies and initiatives, not just in terms of numbers, but in terms of quality as in the objective of 'improving the quality of life' of the people. Monitoring and evaluation was largely absent within government, except for the DLA, and confined to people who attended conferences outside the country (Naidoo, 2012). It was in

this context that the Public Service Commission (PSC), established in 1997, designed its Monitoring and Evaluation systems.

Furthermore South Africa's involvement and participation in the New Partnership for Africa's Development and Renewal (NEPAD) launched in 2001, fore-grounded the need for sustainable development. This strategy was aimed at (1) eradicating poverty, (2) to put African countries on a growth path (3) to combat the marginalisation of African Countries in the global context and to (4) empower women in Africa.

Closely linked to South Africa's and the ruling party's desire to meet the needs of their constituency was the international interaction with other developed and developing countries around the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are eight goals to be achieved by 2015 that respond to the world's main development challenges. The MDGs are drawn from the actions and targets contained in the Millennium Declaration that was adopted by 189 nations-and signed by 147 heads of state and governments during the UN Millennium Summit in September 2000.

The principles of sustainability required and demanded rigorous monitoring and evaluation systems, hence the growing interest in M&E in Southern Africa and indeed in Africa. The very successful conference in December 2004 of the African Evaluation Association (AfrEA) held in Cape Town, South Africa, brought together hundreds of evaluators from all over Africa and other continents. This conference was strongly supported by the South African government in general and more directly by the Public Service Commission of S.A. A direct outcome of this conference was the establishment of a task team mandated to work towards the formation and constitution of an association of evaluators for South Africa. This association SAMEA, the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association was finally launched in November 2005.

A forerunner of SAMEA was SAENeT, the South African Evaluation Network initiated in 2002 by Zenda Ofir as an informal network for evaluators in the country. More than 300 people subscribed to the SAENet listserv. This was done in the wake of a one week training visit in May 2002 by Michael Quin Patton a prominent evaluation expert and

author of several evaluation research texts. A precursor to this attempt at bringing together South African evaluation researchers was by the HSRC (S.A. Human Science and Research Council) when they in 1993, invited the then president of the American Evaluation Association (AEA), David Fetterman to give a series of talks and seminars. This was pre-1994 and before the first democratic elections in this country. The lack of trust among researchers from the (racially) different institutions scuppered this attempt.

In April 2005, before the launch of SAMEA an electronic survey questionnaire, consisting of ten questions, was sent to 410 people on the SAENet database. The survey was aimed at establishing the nature of members' involvement in monitoring and evaluation (M&E), their interest in joining a professional M&E network or association, and the function that such an organisation should fulfil. A total of 96 people participated in the survey, a response rate of about 23%. More than two thirds (69%) of the respondents described themselves as evaluation practitioners responsible for designing and implementing evaluations. The other most common areas of involvement in the field of M&E included using evaluation results to formulate policies, design and implement projects etc. (38%), teaching M&E (29%), and commissioning and funding evaluations (20%). Slightly more people (51%) described their M&E work as specialised in a particular sector, rather than general across sectors (47%). The most common areas of specialisation were Education (33%), HIV / AIDS (15%) and Health (10%). The remaining specialists were spread in small numbers across 14 different sectors.

While this survey provided some picture of the involvement of those who participated, it was impossible to extrapolate, from the results, any meaningful scope and depth of M&E practices in the country. In August of 2005 a follow-up mail survey was conducted. The survey, with self addressed return envelope, was sent to 350 people who were found on the SAENet listserv or indicated on their websites that they conducted evaluations. A total of 127 people returned completed questionnaires. Female respondents accounted for 55% of the returns and 59% declared themselves as being 'White' in terms of race group. 17% ticked off the 'Black' in the race category and the rest being 'Indian',

‘Coloured’ or ‘Other’. This community of M&E practitioners was asked to provide their opinions on the state of M &E in South Africa at that time. The vast majority indicated that they were unsure about the state of M&E but thought there were not enough people capable of doing good quality evaluations, that the quality of the reports were weak, that there was not enough competition in the field, not enough high quality training available, that the Government was not setting a good example, and that M&E was not a coherent profession.

M&E AS A PROFESSION

As stated earlier, the Human Science and Research Council of South Africa, prior to 1994 made several attempts to gather together researchers across the country around research methodologies and evaluation research in particular. There was a huge international interest in developments in South Africa during that period. David Fetterman, the then president of the American Evaluation Association visited during 1993 and shared his thoughts on Empowerment Evaluation. Mark Lipsey another prominent US health researcher joined the University of Stellenbosch on a part-time basis and taught impact evaluation research methods after 1994 at mainly Masters and Doctoral level students. Other US evaluation researchers like Carol Weiss (in 1997) and Michael Quinn Patton (in 2002) came for shorter periods and Patton’s ‘sold out’ training sessions lead to the establishment of the South African Evaluation Network (SAENet), a network that communicated via a listserv that contributed tremendously toward interaction among researchers with interest in evaluation. More government officials joined the listserv and the interaction between AfrEA. – African Evaluation Association and the Public Service Commission of South Africa lead to the conference held in Cape Town in 2004 where hundreds of ‘evaluators’ from Africa and beyond gathered. Local interest in the AfrEA conference was also stimulated by the SAENet pre-conference training programmes offered by Donna Mertens (US) and Patricia Rogers (AUS) among others. This conference was a huge success with substantial

involvement by government officials prompted mainly by the Public Services Commission (PSC). The greatest achievement of the conference in Cape Town was the bringing together of researchers across South Africa who established a task team with the mandate to form and spearhead the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association (SAMEA). Using the AfrEA “Guiding Principles for Evaluation” as its cornerstone, the association was launched in November 2005 with Jennifer Bisgard as its first Chairperson. The SAMEA board consisted of individuals based at different universities in South Africa, government officials, private research companies and other parastatals. As more and more people joined SAMEA, one became aware of the growth of evaluation research courses being offered at various institutions, the establishment of evaluation research units at universities (UCT, WITS, Stellenbosch, Pretoria) and numerous private research agencies springing up and participating in the tendering processes doing evaluation for government departments.

A local textbook used in a number of university based courses was ‘Community Psychology: Theory, method and practice’ (still in use). In their chapter, ‘Social programme evaluation’ Potter and Kruger (2001) reduce the rich spread of methodological approaches to programme evaluation to only three methodological categories. First they refer to a *systematic and measurement-based approach* that, according to them, conceptualises programmes as entities producing effects that can be measured, using social science research, and is based on positivist assumptions. They lump experimental, quasi-experimental, objective-based, comprehensive evaluation models, theory-driven approach all under this approach. The second approach they mention is the *interpretive and naturalistic approach*. This alternative approach to the ‘numbers game’ that describes the previous approach, involved the exclusive use of qualitative methods, and considered itself more holistic. The third category for Potter and Kruger is the *critical and empowerment approach*. Located within the Critical Social Science, this approach view “researchers as being either conscious or unconscious agents of the operation of wider social forces, which act to reinforce or reproduce existing social order (p. 198)” This categorisation is interesting but very limited.

Despite the philosophical and methodological debates, or rather because of these debates, programme evaluation continued to be the busiest and active sector in social science. As far back as (1993) Rossi and Freeman noted that evaluation research was more than the application of methods, more than an isolated academic concern and that it operated in the context of the social policy and public administration movements. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the World Bank, UNICEF and the European Union are examples of international development organisations with significant and active evaluation offices. During November 1995, the first-ever international evaluation conference was held in Vancouver, Canada. "With over 1,500 participants from 61 countries, this conference made it clear that evaluation had become a global challenge (Patton, 1997, p. 15)." For reasons of the scope of evaluation research and the multitude of development programmes implemented the world over generally and in South Africa specifically from 1994 until today, more South African researchers spoke about, like their European counterparts did, about '*Monitoring and Evaluation*' instead of 'program evaluation' as used in the US and other settings.

The growth in the availability of M&E training opportunities was steady and reflected the areas of demand. The University of Pretoria was offering advanced and post-graduate qualifications for M&E in HIV/AIDS and students across Africa attended these courses. Similar courses were offered at universities in Kwa-Zulu-Natal. Wits University, the University of Johannesburg, the University of Cape Town, Stellenbosch University, and the University of the Western Cape, targeted government officials located in the Public Sector with their evaluation research methods courses. UWC had by that time established a School of Government department dedicated to the training of senior public service officials. The University of Johannesburg also had an established School of Public Administration. Most of the training opportunities started out at a post-graduate level, generally located within a 'sectoral' (as in discipline) department, for example in Health, Public Administration, Sociology or Education among others. More recently, several under-graduate credit bearing courses in

M&E are on offer at various institutions of higher learning and credit bearing courses, registered on the National Qualifications Framework are offered by private providers as well as the Public Administration, Leadership and Management Academy (PALAMA). Numerous government officials were also exposed to international training offered by the World Bank in the form of the International Programme in Development Evaluation (IPDET) during 2004 in Ottawa, Canada. The workshop instructors included prominent experts such as Michael Quinn Patton and Ray Rist (Sing, 2004).

The on-going collaboration between SAMEA, the PSC and DPME (the latter formalised in 2010) - there is a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with both government departments - has strengthened SAMEA's international relationships with the American Evaluation Association, IDEAS (International Development Evaluation Associations), UK Evaluation Association and AfrEA. This collaboration has also assured its ability to successfully run its biennial conferences and sustain its membership. According to the MoU, SAMEA, as a national association, is an independent voice, a critical friend that provides expert advice to the DPME – the custodian of M&E within government (Basson, 2013).

The SAMEA biennial conferences provided a platform for the government departments to debate and interrogate its M&E framework. The various drafts have now been finalised into a National Evaluation Policy Framework document (Presidency, 2011). In addition, the conferences infused attention to the values underpinning evaluation methods and challenged all involved, from contractors to recipients of services, to be aware of the values embedded in the programmes, the call for evaluations and the methodological choices for the evaluations. However, a recurring theme or critique at the conferences had been that there was, particularly in government sectors, an over-emphasis on monitoring and not enough effort at evaluating outcomes. There were strong feelings that evaluations in South Africa should go beyond simple output evaluations to more complex outcome and impact assessments. Where impact evaluation was debated there was recognition that rigorous, quantitative impact evaluations, e.g. through randomised control trials (RCT's), were not always feasible in developing countries like S.A.

where unfavourable conditions to use them, frequently abound. Some proposed that evaluations should be more theory-driven than data-driven. More answers were needed to 'why' and 'how' questions and targets for public service delivery programmes and projects should include relevance as well as efficiency, effectiveness and the consequences of policy interventions.

Each conference theme (Values in Evaluations/ Evaluation in Action/Outcomes/ Relevance) attempted to address emerging concerns and resolved that evaluations in South Africa should be designed and implemented in the most appropriate and feasible ways to achieve evaluation goals within existing resource constraints. It was also important to continuously improve evaluation processes through learning from international practices with the realisation that effective M&E relies on the establishment of networks and the cooperation and participation of multiple stakeholders in evaluation processes. The conferences continue to act as an important vehicle for practitioners to present their work and to reflect critically on numerous aspects related to their M&E engagements. This activity (conference engagement) ensures that their practices and insights move beyond reports presented to those who commission evaluations. A significant milestone for evaluators in South Africa and Africa as a whole is the launch of the African Evaluation Journal in 2013, following a proposal as far back as 2004, to capture the lessons learned and to bolster the academic rigour of evaluation practices on the continent.

The organisational linkages, the policy environment and insights, proposals, and resolutions mentioned above are signs of the 'professionalisation' of M&E in South Africa. The kinds of texts on M&E that are emerging; 'frameworks for M&E'; 'Government Departmental Guidelines for M&E' and others are perhaps still limited to 'how-to manuals' but new and focused texts are currently being produced to address this vacuum. There is no doubt that Monitoring and Evaluation is fast developing into a profession in South Africa. If one defines a 'professional' as someone that is highly qualified and competent in a particular field of expertise then a growing number of professionals in M&E is emerging in this country. Judging by the numbers of job

advertisements for M&E specialists, both on-line and the print media, the growth in professional development courses being advertised and the tenders available for M&E professionals to ply their trade – M&E is a fast growing ‘profession’ in South Africa.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION AS AN INDUSTRY

As a developing country with a fairly stable and credible infrastructure, South Africa has been selected as a base for a number of international development/AID agencies who operate in the Southern hemisphere and rest of the African continent.

Organisations such as USAID, UN, GTZ, EU, DFID, WHO and many more have permanent offices in South Africa. Local Service Providers such as Khulisa, Southern Hemisphere, Impact Consulting, Inside-Out, Otherwise, CADRE, TEACH S.A Academy, AII (African Information Initiative), CDRA, Development Works and others regularly advertise their training and they are also listed as service providers with Provincial and National Government Departments providing M&E services. A large number of individuals based at universities across South Africa act as consultants to government and non-government organisations doing evaluation research. International service providers such as MandE, IMA International, CLEAR and IDEAS are some of the imported skills utilised in the Southern African context.

The term ‘industry’ is deliberately used to signal the tremendous growth and application of the M&E field in social development in South and Southern Africa. The term becomes appropriate if one considers the economies of scale, the competitive nature of the tender processes, and the political, social and economic ramifications of the involvement of very many stakeholders, least of all the potential beneficiaries of social development initiatives in South Africa. This industry is also located in a broader social development sector. If one considers the development challenges faced by ‘under-developed’ and ‘developing’ countries in the context of a global debt crisis, where these countries owe the multilateral institutions such as the IMF and World Bank currently around

\$153 billion (Shah, 2005), then the complexity of providing education, health care and other necessary services becomes more evident. These countries, like South Africa have to deliver much needed services to fast growing populations, with high unemployment rates, millions living in unhealthy environments and surviving by means of 'informal sector employment'.

Overall, unemployment figures for South Africa as provided by STATS-SA decreased dramatically over the last decade and have been fluctuating between 23% and 30% over the last three years. The current rate of unemployment of 24.9% is highly contested as differentials become more obvious if disaggregated to racial groupings, economic sectors, gender and age-groups. Unemployment is probably the single most pressing challenge facing South Africa today. Unemployment causes social ills that lead to a loss of hope. These include ills such as crime, disengagement with political processes, and a lack of investment in one's future well-being. Most of these people are adults below the age of 35 and their disillusionment with the 'new' South Africa carries a particular threat to the future of the country.

The challenges above indicate that the 'industry' of Monitoring and Evaluation can be hampered by limited budgets and resources due to limited income or revenue by the National Government leading to allocation of limited budgets to government departments. This may lead to well designed monitoring frameworks by M&E practitioners with limited application because of lack of departmental staff, resources or equipment to store data. A more crucial factor is related to the employment of suitable staff with requisite skills and competence to apply and use M&E systems. In a high unemployment environment, inappropriately skilled workers will treasure their positions by doing the minimum and satisfying an equally ill-informed manager.

Generally the industrial sector is known and valued for its emphasis on 'good quality'. Concepts and processes related to 'quality assurance', 'quality checks', 'good standards', 'high quality' as well as 'value for money', 'cost-effectiveness', 'efficiency', 'branding' and 'profit-making' come from this sector. In a sense, M&E has taken aspects of the industrial sector practices to ensure high quality control and

improvement in the social development environment. As an industry, the managers of M&E must procure service providers to assist them in the delivery and provision of high quality services to society. In the South African context, given its history, this has become an additional challenge. South Africa has been and still is a very unequal society grappling with its Apartheid legacies. Several interventions are in place to combat the negative practices of the past and to ensure that those previously disadvantaged are provided with opportunities previously denied. The Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) legislation is one such policy. This means that when M&E managers or managers within government structures, procure service providers, this policy must be considered. The challenge facing managers is not necessarily whether they adhered to this policy or not but if they have employed the best or most equipped person, organisation or entity to provide the M&E services. Fortunately, and with great efforts through the professionalisation of M&E, very large numbers of 'black' researchers in South Africa have received training in M&E methodologies and are taking up the positions within government or have started their own businesses to tender for M&E work put out to tender by the government departments.

The media constantly reports on the spending patterns of government and tax payers at all levels are aware that they are the contributors to government spending and always make a big fuss when tax payers' money is wasted on non-essential goods and services. Several 'watch-dog' institutions 'the Treasury Department', the 'Public Service Commission', 'the Public Protector', and the 'Auditor-General's Office' are in place to oversee these matters to minimise the risks involved. However these things continue to happen. Similar challenges are faced by non-profit organisations (NPOs). Dependent largely on donor funding, charitable organisations and individuals, NPOs must show that they are making a difference. That their services are valued, needed, appreciated and that they are making progress towards the objectives they had set for themselves. Given the complex scenario sketched earlier about the rates of unemployment in South Africa, lack of adequate housing, poor health care systems experienced by large numbers

of people and other social ills, it becomes extremely difficult for one non-government organisation focusing on one aspect of the lives of one community to isolate its specific contribution to the well-being of that community. NPOs often work in partnership with government departments to ensure access to communities or other organisations (religious/ paralegal) and or volunteers to bolster their capacity. The evaluations of these complex interventions often find positive results within communities but it is difficult to attribute cause and effect.

M&E AS GOVERNANCE TOOL

The intense pressure on the South African Government to deliver services to the much needy population started immediately post 1994 when the ANC won the first democratic elections in South Africa. Various Departments, headed by politically appointed Ministers were set up to plan for and deliver the services. The Treasury, the Auditor-General, the Public Services Commission and a National Department of Local Government (NDLG) were established as 'watchdogs' over these national departments. International experts visited the country to offer and share their expertise and skilled local black people started occupying senior government positions previously reserved for whites only. On the face of things, government departments started changing dramatically, and what was probably the most advantageous was that government officials could finally speak the language(s) of those most needing their services. With the change in the demographics of the staff came an avalanche of demands for government services. More people, or should one say more black people flocked to government departments for services. More black students started attending schools. More students stayed in schools longer, more needed new skills. More blacks needed health care treatment, social welfare support etc. The quality and pace of service delivery by government structures remained problematic. The pro-poor and therefore pro-black spending of the government had little immediate effect. Large scale inequality continued to exist. In their research on the effect of government service

delivery to the poor, van der Berg and Burger (2002) found that nothing much had changed.

The Department of Labour and the Public Service Commission (PSC) were the first official structures to monitor and evaluate government performance and communicate their findings to the various Ministries and Heads of Departments. The PSC also established a 'national anti-corruption hotline' (NACH) where people could complain about the quality of Public Services in their areas. Callers to this 'free' hotline were given the option to remain anonymous in order to encourage the use of the operational intervention. Several reports on the 'Hotline Use' are available including a 'Trend Analysis on Complaints lodged with the Public Service Commission during the 2006/2007 Financial Year'.

In his second term of office the then president of South Africa, established a structure within the Presidency called the Government-Wide M&E framework based on three components; (1) agreed upon principles (2) a compendium of indicators and (3) an implementation plan. In the 2007 report it states that; a GWM&E system is pivotal to effective executive decision-making at the centre of government in support of implementation, for informing evidence-based resource allocation and ongoing policy refinement. To this end, the Presidency has created a web-based system of bi-monthly report cards for each of the 278 activities in government's Programme of Action (PoA). This forms the basis for bi-monthly reporting to Cabinet which is accessible by the broader public on the Presidency website. This framework is now firmly in the hands of the Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) situated in the Presidency. A key initiative by the DPME to improve government performance was the introduction of an outcomes approach (Phillips, 2012). This involved whole- government planning linked to key outcomes; clearly linking inputs and activities to outputs and the outcomes. During the same period when the GWM& Framework was introduced, another structure, the South African Management Development Institute (SAMDI) was created. This institute was established primarily to provide managers at all levels within government with the required knowledge and skills to perform their tasks. This institute

is now called PALAMA, the Public Administration Leadership and Management Academy.

The need for in-depth understanding of monitoring and evaluation within government has been reiterated by the then Minister Chabane (Presidency) in his press statement (February, 2010) where he outlined the core of the government's Medium Term Strategic Framework 2009 – 2014. The government's new outcomes approach, 'is based on a few questions that government had to ask to achieve its objectives: What are the key outcomes that government wants to achieve? Which priority outputs should we measure to see if we are achieving each outcome? Where should the system focus in order to achieve the outputs? How much do we need to invest, within limited resources, to achieve the best mix of desired outcomes? What targets should we set to achieve our desired demands? Informed by this approach, we have turned our priorities into 12 desired outcomes and their associated measurable outputs' (February, 2010). All the ministers and administrators in the various departments will be expected to sign agreements that will commit them to the targets that have been identified. Five priority areas for development have been identified; these are (1) Education; (2) Health; (3) Fighting crime and corruption (4) the Economy and (5) Rural Development.

Monitoring and evaluation will be central to these initiatives. M&E's role and function as a governance tool should be assessed in terms of how it will be used to improve government performance.

CRITICAL REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

M&E as a 'profession' is growing steadily internationally and very fast in South Africa. Presently there are formal M&E positions in every single government department across the country – even if it is not called a 'monitoring official' or 'evaluation delegate', related tasks are performed by civil servants who report to more senior levels where M&E titles are easily found and advertised for in newspapers. Universities, responding to needs expressed by the government, are offering dedicated M&E courses within structures like faculties and departments

that are aimed at skills development in the Public Administration and Governance fields.

M&E as a 'profession' is growing steadily internationally and very fast in South Africa. 'Professionalism' is often defined by the combination of all the qualities that are connected with trained and skilled people in a specific field e.g. a health professional. The demands on government to account for their policies, programmes and activities put pressure on them and society at large to put in place monitoring and evaluation frameworks. Highly skilled individuals have been drawn to the field of M&E because of the tremendous value it can add to growth and development within society. The formation of the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association (SAMEA) in 2005 and its close interaction with the African Evaluation Association (AfrEA) are indicators of a growing 'field' of expertise and that these professionals need to share their expertise on a regular basis.

There are still a number of 'professionals' in South Africa who do evaluation research but would consider themselves as 'social scientists' or 'development specialists' and 'educational professionals'. This is changing as more dedicated M&E work becomes necessary.

Given the developmental needs in this country, the growth in inequality and the huge backlog caused by Apartheid policies this will indeed occur. SAMEA members have moved beyond the accounting and accountability role of M&E and have looked at issues of 'values' and other inter-related matters such as methodological principles. Unlike ten years ago, M&E activities, reports, learning, processes and the people involved are well documented on the internet. The judicious use of ethical standards is the ideal, but Schwandt (2008) also warns of the growing threat of 'technical professionalism'. Technical professionalism, according to him, foregoes the contribution to the public values for which the profession stands and is replaced with the professional reduced as a supplier of expert services. This kind of evaluation practice can result in society viewing evaluation primarily as a technical undertaking, that is, the successful application of tools, systems, or procedures for determining outcomes or effects of policies and programmes; rather than

evaluation being acknowledged as an independent kind of questioning and informed critical analysis.

The true value of M&E is slowly emerging. Government departments recognise the need for more intensive training. Palama is widening a circle of service providers to offer training to government officials and training manuals for introductory courses have been completed. Courses offered by various higher education institutions are being scrutinised by potential students and compared to other available courses.

The involvement and engagement of public and private entities in the quality of qualifications, skills development, programme development, and policy implementation are all part of the scope of M&E practices. The very many courses in M&E at the different institutions have been and will continue to be, and should be scrutinised in South Africa for quality control by external people as well as by participants. As with all initiatives to improve the lives of others, to generate wealth and income there will continue to be challenges. Any industry has in the past or present felt the pressure of global economic recessions and/or political change. A sudden surge of national or international meltdowns in say, the financial sectors, manufacturing and production sectors, agricultural sector, will affect M&E as an industry. The UK development agency, DFID, has for example decided to cut back its development work in South Africa. Government budgets are directly affected by economic crises and spending patterns will be affected. Social Research, including applied research such as M&E will and can suffer if its worth and 'value for money' cannot be justified.

The current growth in M&E is welcomed by most individuals who understand the underlying purpose of M&E within a programme or development initiative, who have some grasp of how it fits in with the overall intent of programmes, understand why particular activities and outcomes are being measured and others not and the role they have to play in order to reap the benefits of the various M&E systems. However, countries, governments, political parties, provinces, departments, individual contractors, developers and others, more often than not, are faced with challenges of lack of resources, lack of capital, lack of technical skills, natural and unnatural disasters that impede planning and

implementation of growth and development initiatives. Newly formed Local Governments and Municipalities in South Africa have struggled to remain within budget for a number of reasons. The national government through its change strategy documents; provide many instances of how service delivery such as access to formal housing has improved dramatically, but they also acknowledge that the government had not delivered optimally in relation to public expectations (Chibane, 2012). An improved, more efficient performance management system at local government is being muted. There is agreement that currently there is non-alignment between personal performance targets and local government objectives, regional and provincial outcomes and national goals. The use of different terms above is merely to emphasise the disjuncture at various levels of assessments. The personal performance policies and strategies have instilled a culture of fear among local government employees (Williams, 2006). It is envisaged that the National Evaluation Policy Framework will link and integrate personal performance more with regional and broader outcomes.

THE FUTURE?

Who knows, the above is not an easy task. The National Planning Commission within the Presidency believes that its vision (plan) is doable, manageable and sustainable. South Africa with regards to Monitoring and Evaluation has grown in leaps and bounds. The opportunities for learning are plentiful - if not locally then within and from international institutions. Local texts are being written; more local knowledge is being constructed. More people choose to be involved in this area of work. There is a structure (SAMEA) that can facilitate the bringing together of ideas, information and bring synergy to a vastly disparate field of research. There is space for creative thinking among academic, professionals and government (with governance responsibilities) people. What is slowly emerging in the African context are examples of successfully implemented government-wide M&E systems. Meaning that we now have systems in place that have developed

over a long period of time. However, these systems are still bedevilled by political and ideological cycles created by the necessary democratic processes through elections every five to seven years, depending on the country and or levels of government.

This chapter makes several unique contributions to understanding the building blocks of M&E in South Africa and the broader African context: First, it provides a comprehensive historical timeline of M&E development in South Africa, documenting how evaluation practices evolved from primarily donor-driven requirements in the NGO sector to becoming institutionalized within government systems and professional networks. This historical perspective is invaluable for understanding the trajectory of indigenous evaluation development in Africa.

Second, the chapter identifies the distinctive tripartite nature of M&E in South Africa as simultaneously a profession, an industry, and a governance tool. This multifaceted conceptualization offers a more nuanced understanding of how evaluation functions within African societies beyond the typical Western focus on methodology and technical aspects.

Third, the critical reflections on the challenges facing M&E in South Africa—including the gap between policy and implementation, the risk of “technical professionalism” overshadowing public values, and the need for more inclusive evaluation dialogues—provide important insights for other African countries developing their own national evaluation systems.

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Chapter 12

Citizen-Based Made in Africa Evaluation Mechanisms: Lessons from Uganda's Community-Based Advocacy Fora “*Barazas*”

Josephine Watera (Parliament of Uganda)

ABSTRACT

In this decade of action for global agenda 2030, finding a path towards sustainable development will require the pooling of diverse perspectives, knowledge and resources, but more importantly through a citizen-based approach.

As African countries take greater ownership of, and leadership in, their development processes, they have increasingly developed their systems to lead, manage and account for resources invested in these processes and results produced to them. These systems have been conceptualised around the philosophy of *Ubuntu*, whose core principles and values emphasise communalism, empathy, and interconnectedness. One such system is *Baraza*, which has gained prominence across Africa as a tool for monitoring and evaluating community development. *Baraza* is as a platform for creating awareness, responding to issues affecting a given community, sharing vital information, providing citizens with the opportunity to identify and propose solutions to concerns.

The Government of Uganda, in 2009 under a presidential directive, introduced Community-Based Advocacy Fora, *Baraza*, as part of

its efforts to strengthen accountability in public service delivery and improve on the performance monitoring in the local governments. *Baraza* creates a platform for technical officers and political leaders to provide evaluative information about the status of service delivery to the citizens and in turn paving way for citizens to participate in the development cycle by monitoring the usage of public funds and other resources.

This chapter documents the experiences of Uganda in implementing *Baraza* platforms as a step towards “Made-in-Africa Evaluations”, highlighting the history of decentralization policy framework in Uganda, the *Baraza* concept. The author creates links between the CLEAR Model and Ubuntu principles to derive lessons and conclusions.

KEY MESSAGES

- The global agenda of Sustainable Development Goals calls for “Leave no one behind” while the African Union Agenda 2063 pledges to mobilize people and their ownership of continental programmes.
- Evaluation plays a critical role in accomplishing these great aspirations. Evaluations examine actions and results and ask the questions: are we doing the right thing? and Are we doing things right? These questions can only be relevant if asked in the right context, hence the debate for Made-in-Africa Evaluations.
- Ubuntu principles and baraza in community development resonate with the two main objectives of evaluations, accountability and learning.
- Citizen participation in monitoring and evaluation offers renewed opportunities to strengthen democracy, accountability and rule of law.

INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly interconnected world, marked by international movement towards widely shared information, greater group and individual engagement solidarity, citizen participation offers renewed opportunities to strengthen democracy, accountability and rule of law (Mindzie, 2015). In

Africa, this renewed participation is made possible by a relatively conducive, normative and institutional environment. As a result, African citizens are increasingly countering poor governance practices perpetuated by the monopolization of power, control over national resources by ruling elites, and the marginalization of groups, including women and youth, who still constitute Africa's largest component of the population.



monitoring and for holding African governments accountable.

Similarly, the African Union Agenda 2063 pledges to mobilize people and their ownership of continental programmes; promote the principle of self-reliance and the importance of capable, inclusive and accountable states and institutions at all levels and in all spheres (Africa Union Commission, 2015, p. 1). The common thread between the 2030

"A prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the international arena"

—Pan African Vision, Para 4,
Agenda 2063

"All power belongs to the people..."

— Article 1 of the 1995 Constitution of
the Republic of Uganda

The United Nations Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development sets out 17 goals. At the core of this discussion is the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 on the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies, the provision of access to justice for all, and the building of effective, accountable and inclusive institutions. SDG 16 offers additional prospective for strong citizen-based

global agenda and AU Agenda 2063 agenda is working together for common good, a core tenant of Ubuntu principles. Ubuntu, a term originating from the Nguni Bantu languages of Southern Africa, is more than just a word; it is a philosophical concept that highlights the belief that an individual's identity and sense of self are deeply rooted in their relationships with others and their contribution to the collective well-being of the community (Ajitoni 2024, p. 1). The term is often translated as "I am because we are," emphasizing the interconnectedness and interdependence of individuals within a community (Ewuoso & Hall 2019). Inclusive and participatory community development involves processes whose salience cannot be gainsaid as the relevant overarching framework within which to explore and discuss Ubuntu (Muia et.al, 2023). Evaluations are mainly designed to examine actions and results and asks the questions: are we doing the right thing? Are we doing things right? Are we getting results that make a difference? Are these the right results, and what is the impact and value? (Sukai 2013, p. 77). Increasingly, Ubuntu philosophy is gaining prominence in the field of evaluation. Ubuntu has been proposed as a useful alternative to current (Western) ethical frameworks for evaluating global bioethical issues (Ewuoso & Hall 2019, p93). One such system for Ubuntu is Baraza. The *Baraza* platform asks evaluation questions with African lenses of the involvement of the community. The application of Ubuntu principles and baraza in community development resonate with the two main objectives of evaluations, accountability and learning.

This paper documents the experiences of Uganda in implementing Baraza platforms as a step towards "Made-in-Africa Evaluations", highlighting the history of decentralization policy framework in Uganda, the Baraza concept. The author creates links between the CLEAR Model and Ubuntu principles to derive lessons and conclusions.

SETTING THE STAGE FOR MADE-IN-AFRICA EVALUATION SYSTEMS: THE CONCEPT OF *BARAZAS*

There is a growing concern across the globe that a one-size-fits-all programme evaluation approach according to the Western evaluation models is not always appropriate in the cultural and developmental contexts of Africa (Cloete 2016, p. 55). The concept of a more appropriate Africa-rooted programme evaluation management model has now been explicitly placed on the evaluation agenda in Africa. Moreover, Community Engagement Partners & Babler (2015) argue that every context is different, so evaluation has to be attentive to what people care about and are experiencing in their community. According to Segone et al. (2013, p. 8), exercising evaluation in an independent, credible and useful way is essential to realize the contribution it can make to good governance, including accountability from governments to their citizens, transparency in the use of resources and their results, and in learning from experience. *Baraza* has gained prominence across Africa as a tool for monitoring and evaluating community development.

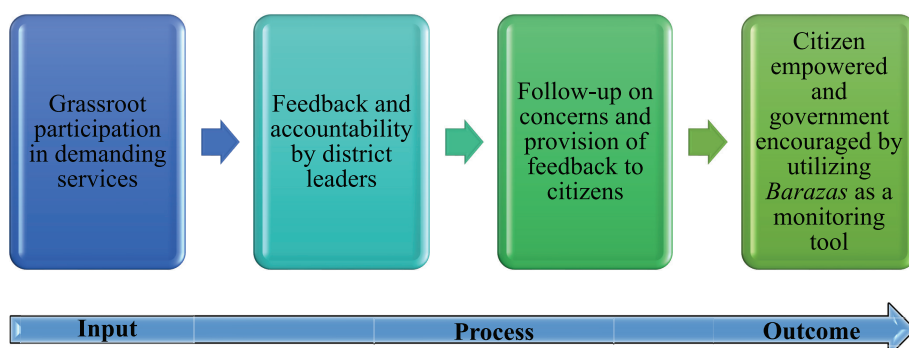
Loimeier (2005) presents a wide range of meanings of the Kiswahili word *baraza*, including committee, assembly, political groups in governance (senate / congress), council, elders of a tribe, entrance hall, reception room, gathering, meeting, sitting area outside traditional Swahili homes, a bench under a shelter, and a verandah. It is evident that the structure of Baraza is largely resonates Ubuntu philosophy, which emphasizes the interconnectedness and interdependence of individuals and the importance of social harmony, has been lauded as a potential framework for community development that prioritizes community participation, social cohesion, and sustainable development (Nworu 2023, p. 27). These principles have been pivotal in fostering social cohesion and harmony, ensuring that communities work together for the common good (Ajitoni 2024, p. 1). The baraza intervention is a community-based monitoring intervention that combines the provision of

information to with the opportunity for citizens to engage with each other and with decision makers at a local level (Mogues 2023, p. 3).

The Uganda Human Rights Commission and United Nations Uganda, (2014, p. 4), view Baraza as a platform for creating awareness, responding to issues affecting a given community, sharing vital information, providing citizens with the opportunity to identify and propose solutions to concerns. It also an avenue for information dissemination to the community as well as a quick means of getting feedback.

The results chain of *Baraza* platforms illustrated in figure 2 shows the link to the core objectives of evaluations, learning and accountability.

Figure 1: The Results Chain of *Baraza* Platform

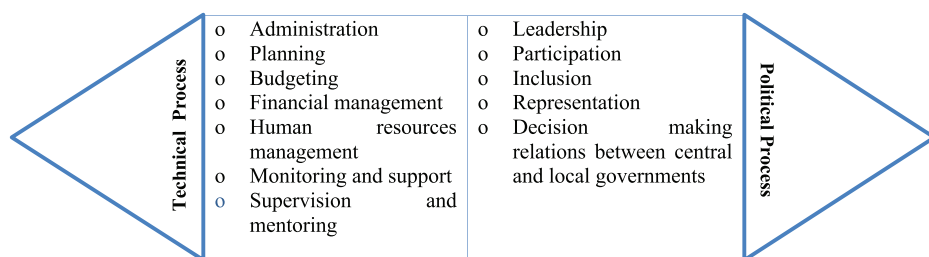


Across East Africa, baraza has gained prominence as a tool for community development. In precolonial times, Kenyan tribal groupings had a council of elders to oversee political and legal matters, particularly convening public gatherings whenever a community felt the need to address issues such as insecurity or social deviance (Naanyu et.al, 2011). In Zanzibar, mabaraza are essential for social discourse, and participating in a baraza is an excellent way to observe others, express personal ideas, and exchange information at local level (Loimeier, 2005). In Burundi, baraza means “gathering” or “round table”, and mabaraza have traditionally been used to settle differences and discuss community issues (Naanyu et.al, 2011).

“Baraza” in the context of Uganda’s Decentralization Policy Framework

In 1992, Uganda introduced decentralization policy where the central government cedes some of its power to local governments to carry out part of its mandates on its behalf. The policy was strengthened by its inclusion in the 1995 Constitution of the Republic Uganda and further consolidated in the Local Government Act (1997). Decentralization is both a technical and political process as illustrated in figure 1.

Figure 2: Technical and Political processes of Decentralization policy in Uganda



Uganda decentralization policy was designed to: improve service delivery in local government and lower levels; strengthen people’s participation in initiating, planning, implementation and control of their socio-political and economic developments; strengthen transparency and accountability in the management of local governments; and promote people’s ownership of development policies.

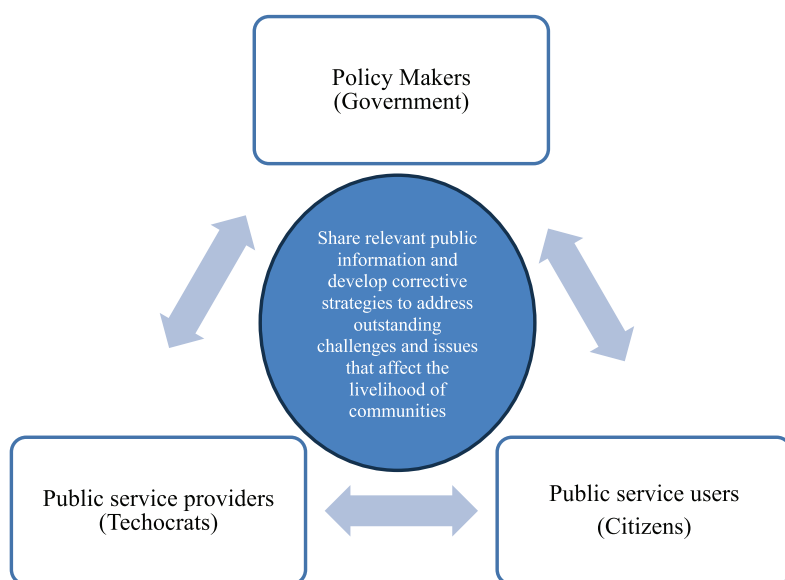
In 2008, H.E. President Yoweri Museveni of the Republic of Uganda directed that meetings be held at sub-country level across the country as community dialogue platforms that engage the local population and their leaders on matters of service delivery. Since 2009, the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) has been implementing this directive under a community-based monitoring and engagement mechanism-*Barazas*. *Barazas* are public fora conducted at sub-county level for the local leaders to justify to the people how public funds received, for a specific financial year, were being utilized. In Uganda, barazas take a comprehensive, multi-sector approach, enabling cross-sectoral planning and

potentially allowing for re-allocation of resources across sectors to solve problems that were identified during these meetings (Mogues 2023 et. al, p. 2). In these fora, the local government leadership is expected to demonstrate what resources they have received, and what results have been achieved in five (5) key priority sectors, namely: Health, Education, Water, Agriculture, and Roads. These fora are among the measures instituted by government to stamp out corruption, increase transparency in the management of public funds, improve accountability and enhance the public's involvement in holding the government to account for service delivery.

The ultimate purpose of *Baraza* is to bring together stakeholders to share public information; and generate debate and dialogue on how to develop collective strategies to improve service delivery at the community level as illustrated in figure 3.

The fora bring politicians, civil servants, and citizens together in town hall-type meetings (*barazas*) to share information and engage with each other (Mogue 2023 et.al, p. 1).

Figure 3: Implementation mechanisms and key Players in the *Baraza* Platform in Uganda



Theoretical Framework underpinning “Barazas”- CLEAR Model

In order to facilitate a deeper reflection on what has worked about the *Baraza*, this paper employed the “CLEAR” model for citizen participation at the local level (Lowndes and Pratchett, 2010). The CLEAR model was operationalized for international use at the request of the Council of Europe’s Steering Committee on Local and Regional Democracy since 2006. This paper extends the application of this model to baraza platforms and links its elements to Ubuntu philosophy. Historically, Ubuntu has been integral to African societies, guiding social interactions, governance, and conflict resolution, serving as a moral compass, promoting values such as empathy, compassion, respect, and mutual support (Ajitoni 2024, p. 4)

The CLEAR model presents a framework for understanding public participation and argues that participation is most successful or effective where citizens *Can do*, *Like to*, *are Enabled to*, *are Asked to* and *are Responded to*, as illustrated in figure 4. This paper places this model in the context of *Barazas* based on the financing, governance, organization, documentation and follow-up of outcomes.

Figure 4: The CLEAR model of citizen participation in local governments



***Findings on Barazas against the five factors
of the CLEAR Model***

Can do

“Can do” refers largely to arguments about socio-economic status, in that when people have the appropriate skills and resources, they are more able to participate (Lowndes and Pratchett, 2010). These skills range from the ability and confidence to speak in public or write letters, to the capacity to organise events and encourage others of similar mind to support initiatives. Ubuntu also encourages collective responsibility and cooperation. It underscores the importance of working together for the common good, whether in familial, social, or economic contexts (Ajitoni 2024, p. 4).

Barazas are initiated, coordinated and logistically supported by the OPM, but their implementation has been decentralized, with the office of the Resident District Commissioner (RDC) in each respective district taking the lead in local coordination and mobilization, hence reinforcing a sense of attachment and participation. In some instances, however, there have been reports of delayed payment of facilitation funds to the Resident District Commissioners and the coordination team at the local level, causing delays in the mobilization process and awareness campaign within the district, hence a great threat to the success of this initiative (Office of the Prime Minister, 2017).

The RDCs and selected moderators have been equipped with additional skills on how to facilitate *Barazas* and report in a timely way to relevant authorities (Office of the Prime Minister, 2017). Additionally, as part of the steps towards standardized and formalized procedures of conducting *Barazas*, a manual was developed in 2013 to guide the implementation of the *Baraza* program. One of the objectives for the manual is to support training of trainers and other capacity building initiatives on the *Baraza* program (OPM, 2013).

Despite these milestones, several studies have pointed out low literacy levels as an impeding factor for the success of *Barazas* (Initiative for Social and Economic Rights, 2018). Whereas *Barazas* are supposed to be conducted in local languages, some of the local

leaders and technocrats cannot easily make presentations or respond to issues in local languages.

Like to

“Like to” rests on the idea that people’s felt sense of being part of something encourages them to engage. The argument is that if one feels excluded or senses a lack of belonging, then there are low chances of participation (Lowndes and Pratchett, 2010). A sense of trust, connection and linked networks can, according to social capital argument, enable people to work together and co-operate for participation. The philosophy of Ubuntu highlights the belief that an individual’s identity and sense of self are deeply rooted in their relationships with others and their contribution to the collective well-being of the community (Ajitoni 2024, p. 1).

Unlike the former centralized government structure where public service officials at the lower local level (sub-county) would implement development plans formulated by the central government at the district level and report back again, the decentralized system and more importantly the *Baraza* approach has placed an uphill task for technocrats to be directly accountable and responsive to the citizens within their purview (Campenhout et al., 2017). This system has been essential in creating a sense of belonging for programs at the local government.

Barazas were found to be not only means for evaluating project implementation, but also a mechanism for identifying priority areas that require further or future action. Citizens can exceedingly attend *Barazas* if information about them is availed in time using different platforms and citizens mobilised using multiple means (Initiative for Social and Economic Rights, 2018).

However, reports from districts have pointed out that the *Baraza* concept is still misconstrued by several people as a political forum at which grievances and sentiments between varying political factions are aired (Office of the Prime Minister, 2017). The government has already responded to this challenge with a revised manual for conducting *Barazas*.

Enabled to

“Enabled to”, as a factor in participation, is premised on the research observation that most participation is facilitated through groups or organizations (Lowndes and Pratchett, 2010). Collective participation provides continuous reassurance and feedback that the cause of engagement is relevant and that participation is having some value. Ubuntu incorporates dialogue, preserving the Other in their Otherness, in their uniqueness, without letting the Other slip into distance (Bagele 2012, p. 162).

Article 38 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda provides for citizen participation and thus the *Baraza* initiative is one of the mechanisms that enables and affords citizens an opportunity to participate in the government service delivery process.

On a given *Baraza* event, the three stakeholders are represented by both district level and sub-county level equivalents. The political heads (principals) constitute committees that initiate projects, approve budgets and monitor government programs and service delivery. The technical side is led by the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), who is head of civil service at the districts and is mandated to oversee the various sectors and each of the sector heads (agriculture, education, health, water and roads). Based on this set-up, community members are enabled to address their matters directly with the principals and technocrats with a reassurance of positive results.

However, in other areas, the people living in remote hard-to-reach areas had low participation. Such factors, if not properly addressed, can disable the success of the initiative and probably miss out on key issues that could be of significance (Office of the Prime Minister, 2017).

Asked to

“Asked to” builds on the finding that mobilization matters. People tend to become engaged more often and more regularly when they are asked to engage. People’s readiness to participate often depends upon whether or not they are approached and how they are approached

(Lowndes and Pratchett, 2010). Mobilization can come from a range of sources, but the most powerful form is when those responsible for a decision ask others to engage with them in making the decisions. Lowndes et al. (2006) observe that the degree of openness of political and managerial systems has a significant effect, with participation increasing where there are a variety of invitations and opportunities. In the ubuntu context, to exist is to respect others and oneself. Ubuntu embraces the importance of agreement and consensus (Louw, 2001). In African traditional culture, when issues are discussed at the Kgotla (community gathering space), there may be a hierarchy of importance among speakers, but every person gets an equal chance to speak up until some kind of agreement, consensus, or group cohesion is reached (Bagele 2012, p. 162).

Barazas are preceded with posters relaying information about the service delivery strategic locations across the sub-county where Barazas will take place and community members called upon to participate (Campenhout et al., 2017). In order to attract good attendance, they are held in or near public places like schools and during community meetings like market days.

The agenda of a *Baraza* event starts with opening remarks by the Resident District Commissioner of the host district who explains the objectives and process of the engagement, followed by speeches of district and sub-county political heads and of a representative from the Office of the Prime Minister, and at the core of it, a presentation by the Chief Administrative Officer on the performance of the previous financial year. Where necessary, that presentation is further reinforced by submissions from respective heads of departments. The question-and-answer session constitutes the largest part of the interactive meeting where citizens are asked to make submissions in response to the presentations, in terms of additional information, questions or complaints.

Largely, the participants raise their issues or contribute to the proceedings through verbal communication and, to some extent, written anonymous notes to not only cater for individual communication, but also ensure maximum participation where there are time constraints.

Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (2018) observed that poor and marginalized groups including the youth and women reasonably participated in the *Barazas* and, indeed, in some cases, women were found to have participated more than men.

Responded to

“Responded to” captures the idea that for people to participate on a sustainable basis, they have to believe that their involvement is making a difference, which is achieving positive results. For people to participate, they have to believe that they are going to be listened to and, if not always agreed with, at least in a position to see their views taken into account (Lowndes and Pratchett, 2010). Responsiveness is about ensuring feedback, which involves explaining how the decision was made, and the role of participation in that. In their use for information gathering, information dissemination, social alignment, and community social mobilization, mabaraza can potentially be used as a form of action research (Naanyu et.al, 2011, p. 162). Ubuntu stresses that individuals are inextricably linked to their communities. The well-being of one person is seen as directly affecting the well-being of others, promoting a sense of solidarity and mutual responsibility (Ajitoni 2024, p. 4).

From a number of assessments, service users/community members felt that they were being responded to (Initiative for Social and Economic Rights, 2018). According to Campenhout et al. (2017), stakeholders thought that *Barazas* are useful for improving service delivery across all sectors and had no difficulty in providing examples of changes they felt were a direct result of the *Barazas* being held. These were in terms of projects that were previously dragging being finished or taken up afresh, sub-standard work being redone and, in some instances, priorities were changed to better align with citizen’s needs. A substantial part of these outcomes seemed to derive from the *Baraza’s* potential to simply fix information asymmetries.

Emerging Lessons and Recommendations

As Africa through its agenda 2063 aspires for an Africa whose development is people-driven (African Union Commission, 2015), there is a number of emerging lessons from such initiatives with no exception to *Barazas* in Uganda.

Information is power only if you can take action with it. Then, and only then, does it represent knowledge and, consequently, power.
—Daniel Burrus

Capacity to engage - *Barazas* have been instrumental in providing accurate information to the citizenry on how government operates. However, low literacy rates remain a big challenge for the effective implementation of the Baraza program.

Participatory planning - This promotes ownership of decisions, effective implementation of actions and sustainability of results. *Barazas* are premised on the principal of participatory planning right from the village level. It has enabled Government and Local Governments to better understand the local needs of people.

Timing/periodicity - *Barazas* are planned for only once a year, yet the original directive by the president was twice a year. He could have envisaged the first session for planning and the second for reporting results or giving feedback. There is need to move beyond traditional models of governance where citizen input is received just once per election cycle, or sometimes not at all.

Feedback mechanisms - With only one annual opportunity to hold the *Baraza* in a district, the process of providing feedback still remains weak. Enhancing central government's responsiveness to citizen's development demands and public service delivery concerns is critical for the success of the initiative. There is a need to build institutional frameworks that incorporate citizen voices in decision-making processes. There is also a need to develop a corrective strategy aimed at enhancing public accountability through which the central government's quick responsiveness can rebuild government's popularity towards its citizens.

Funding - Whereas the original presidential directive was to conduct *Barazas* at sub-county level, with about 1,400 sub-counties in Uganda, amidst limited resources, the Office of the Prime Minister is still constrained to deliver on this mandate. There is a need to devote more resources to this initiative which has been key in increasing a sense of citizenship amongst Ugandans. The financial support from development partners could also make a great difference towards the effective implementation of *Barazas* in Uganda.

Institutionalization of downward accountability - Have each sub-county and district plan own *Baraza* within a financial year. This is critical in bringing about improvements in public service delivery and transparency in the use of public resources. This will instil a home-grown culture of independent citizen monitoring for constructive criticism sustained the wellbeing of the people.

Assessment of the *Baraza* initiative - The *Baraza* initiative has been implemented now for almost a decade, but so far only one comprehensive assessment has been conducted. It is important that the Office of the Prime Minister and districts themselves engage in continuous assessment of the initiative to take stock of what has worked and what has not and make necessary adjustments to the conceptualization and implementation of the initiative. Even more important is an extended study on the assessment of the *Baraza* Process, in terms of its effectiveness in influencing decision-making processes.

CONCLUSION

Evaluation is a judgement of value or worth and provides information to support decision-making (Sukai 2013, p. 77). In development evaluation, it supports accountability for the effective use of resources,

"Knowledge is power. Information is liberating. Education is the premise of progress, in every society, in every family"
—Kofi Annan

lessons for improvement, knowledge sharing, and the distillation of this knowledge for use.

Barazas are good accountability platforms or mechanisms and can thus be very instrumental in enhancing citizen-based monitoring and improving local public service delivery systems.

Barazas have been at the centre of sharing information and educating masses of their role in holding the government accountable and ultimately tapping their knowledge on community needs-based planning and service delivery, which is core in advancing the learning function of evaluations.

Barazas are instrumental in contributing to the overall aspirations of Agenda 2063, “the Africa We Want” which other African countries can learn from despite the gaps identified. It is noted that SDG 16 addresses three interrelated topics, namely “peace”, “inclusion” and “institutions”. “Inclusion” and “institutions” are also highly relevant for the achievement of other SDGs. These two topics are the core drivers of Baraza platforms in Uganda, but more important at the centre of advancing made-in-Africa evaluation approaches.

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