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INDIGENISING EVALUATION KNOWLEDGE: EXPLORING THE EPISTEMIC IDENTITY OF AFRICAN EVALUATORS

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Introduction

National Monitoring and Evaluation Systems (NMESs) continue to emerge in Africa due to the growing need for governments to strengthen accountability, and a call in the Sustainable Development Goals for country-led evaluation systems (Rosenstein, 2013). These systems are built to generate knowledge on the implementation and results of public sector strategies, policies and programmes in relation to national goals, such as economic growth or poverty reduction (Engela & Ajam, 2010). In essence, these systems provide norms for the judgement of outcomes and impacts of government programming. However, there is growing concern that the donor-driven roots of the M&E sector are creating systems that are far from transformative, but rather more deeply entrenching neo-colonial development epistemologies and pathways.

This chapter begins by exploring the emergence of NMES within the trajectory of the knowledge indigenisation discourse in Africa. It then looks at recent data from a survey on evaluation professionals in the region, to try and bring some empirical grounding to questions of indigeneity of the sector. Finally, it considers the relationship between the epistemological identity of evaluation practitioners (professional identity, country of residence, evaluation field, specialised training and years in the evaluation sector) and their relationship to evaluation approaches and methodological choices. It uses these to make a case for stronger engagement between the fields of monitoring and evaluation and indigenous knowledge systems to ensure contextually appropriate development pathways are being charted.

The establishment of the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) in South Africa in 2009, for example, pioneered monitoring and evaluation within the public sector, with the governments of Benin, Uganda, Ghana and Kenya, amongst others, rapidly taking steps to develop national evaluation policies and systems. The mandate of DPME is to facilitate inter alia the development of plans or delivery agreements for the strategic cross-cutting priorities or outcomes of government; monitor the performance of individual national and provincial government departments and municipalities; and promote good planning and M&E practices in government (DPME, 2014). Over the last decade, Uganda, Benin, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire and Niger, amongst others, have made tremendous strides in entrenching NMESs. This development has happened in parallel with increasing professionalisation of the evaluation sector in the region. The African Evaluation Association (AfrEA) has seen its

membership of voluntary organisations for professional evaluators (VOPEs) grow and, in 2017, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) accredited the *African Evaluation Journal* for the first time, demonstrating that the sector has entrenched itself in higher education institutions as well.

Both the supply and demand sides of the evaluation profession are struggling for capacity to grow at a rate commensurate with the expansion of the systems and gaps are now being acknowledged (Abrahams, 2015). This chapter focuses on the supply side. Within this context, a number of challenges have emerged, including the need for contextually relevant and utilisable evaluation results, and the need to increase the pool of competent African evaluators to ease the reliance on evaluators from the North. The knowledge-generation agenda through NMEs is happening within a trajectory of a growing discourse on the decolonisation of knowledge and indigenisation of evaluation in Africa (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018; Chilisa, Major, Gaotlhobogwe & Mokgolodi, 2016). Additionally, there is a growing body of knowledge on addressing the Western-centric character of management knowledge within public sector institutions (Girei, 2017). This is in light of the debates around the highly Eurocentric nature of the evaluation enterprise where approaches and methodologies are biased towards Western epistemologies.

According to Chilisa et al. (2016:314), it is fundamental for evaluators and researchers to debate the assumptions about the nature of reality (ontology), knowledge (epistemology) and values (axiology) that inform Afrocentric methodologies and worldviews in evaluation enquiry and practice. This is viewed as a prerequisite for indigenising evaluation knowledge. The decolonisation of knowledge or epistemic freedom discourse recognises the need for African-rooted epistemologies in addressing the contextual nature of social development. Epistemologies and knowledge systems at most African institutions, including universities and the public sector, are argued not to have considerably changed. They remain rooted in colonial, apartheid worldviews and epistemological traditions (Heleta, 2016). Indigenous knowledge, the locally-based knowledge created before colonisation, continues to exist in most parts of the world and within the global knowledge economy in an increasingly marginalised position (Connel, 2016). Thus, there is need for the deconstruction of existing methodologies and methods that (re)produce the coloniality of knowledge towards a reconstruction/or reinvention of research and evaluation practice.

As NMESs grow in Africa, there is need for a better understanding of the epistemological grounding of the M&E profession (Cloete, 2016). There is a growing recognition that evaluation processes and products may be customised to reflect culturally-based programme strength and effectiveness, and to discover knowledge relevant to institutional transformation that enhances public sector performance in Africa (Morelli & Mataira, 2010). Epistemology enhances understanding of the nature of knowledge from evaluation, its possibility, scope and general basis (Hamlyn, 1995:242). This ensures the adequacy, relevance, validity, and legitimacy of evaluation knowledge.

Evaluation professionals are grappling with the development of African-rooted evaluation approaches. This discourse is being driven by the African Evaluation Association (AfrEA) within the theme of Made in Africa Evaluation, calling attention to the need for more discussion around African evaluation approaches, tools and methods. Such approaches are envisaged to incorporate cultural knowledge and values that guide understandings of and responses to developmental needs, priorities and African aspirations. The seminal works for this approach have been informed by African relational paradigms¹ as a basis for culturally relevant evaluations based on African worldviews (Chilisa, Major, Gaotlhobogwe & Mokgolodi, 2016; Chilisa & Malunga, 2012). However, this discussion has lacked both a broader theoretical linkage to the construction of knowledge, and a specific empirical foundation of the professional evaluation sector. With regards to improving the pool of African experts, there are growing efforts on evaluation capacity building (ECB) in order to improve competencies of African evaluators. This professionalisation agenda aims at enhancing the required competencies, standards and guidelines that inform professional evaluation practice. However, there is not yet consensus across the sector about what these competencies look like, nor what the most appropriate mechanism would be for strengthening them.

Within this context, addressing these evaluation supply side constraints invariably encompasses unpacking and understanding issues of epistemological identity and linkages with evaluation approaches, methods, paradigms and beliefs in knowledge. The notion of Made in Africa has obvious epistemological connotations since it aims at inculcating African-rooted epistemologies to evaluators. On the other hand, development of contextually relevant ECB

¹ These philosophies, world views and paradigms share relational ways of perceiving reality and of being, ways of knowing and value systems (Chilisa et al., 2016:317).

systems requires an appreciation of the epistemological identity of African evaluators, since the process requires shifts in relationships, power and identity (Walters, 2007). As outline in the preceding sections, it is evident that there is widespread assertion that African evaluators are utilising Western approaches and methodologies. In addition, the role of identity in the broader knowledge decolonisation discourse is gaining momentum. In fact, decolonising knowledge should be African-people centred (Chilisa et al., 2016:316; Chilisa, 2012).

Within the broader framework of the Made in Africa Evaluation approach there is need for in-depth understanding on methodological choices by African evaluators. However, issues of identity in relation to methodological choices and approaches still need empirical research. Methodological choices reflect different epistemologies, ontologies and axiologies. Questions around factors that significantly affect methodological choices by African evaluators need to be explored to appreciate the epistemic constructs of African evaluators. This chapter asserts that unpacking and understanding of existing epistemological, ontological an axiological beliefs of African evaluators are important steps in indigenising knowledge. This chapter, therefore, addresses three research questions:

1. What does empirical evidence say about the frequent assertion that most evaluators undertaking evaluations in Africa are from the West?
2. What are the perceptions on the Made in Africa Evaluation approaches?
3. What is the association between various attributes of identity and choice of methodological approaches by African evaluators?

This chapter draws from a collaborative survey conducted in 2016 by the Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results for Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA) and the Centre for Research on Evaluation, Science and Technology (CREST). The evaluation profession is saddled with a history stemming from the international donor space and remains strongly linked to the neo-colonial development paradigms. While some have indicated that a lack of transformation in the sector remains a limitation of the field, these assertions have had a weak empirical basis (Cloete, 2016). By drawing on new empirical data, this chapter explores how the politics of identity are located in the evaluation profession.

An overview of foundational issues

The growth of public sector M&E systems in Africa

There is no doubt that public sector M&E systems in Africa have seen unprecedented growth over the last decade (Cloete, 2014). However, this growth has been characterised by three main issues. The first is that it has been uneven, with governments who are prepared to confront failures of policy or implementation at the forefront, and other countries conspicuously silent. The second is that this growth in systems and mandate has not always been matched by an equivalent growth in capacity to implement, so there has been unevenness in implementation. Finally, there are limitations in expanding both the supply of professional evaluators and the public sector demand for evaluation due to a mismatch between supply and demand in the region (Goldman, Mathe, Jacob, Hercules, Amisi, Buthelezi, Narsee, Ntakumba & Sadan, 2015). This mismatch is still being understood and demands stronger empirical foundations to be interrogated effectively.

On the demand side, there is a large global literature on evaluation use that focuses on understanding the role of the commissioning organisation, from management to changing programme design (Bourgeois & Nare, 2015; Patton, 2008; Sanderson, 2002). While an explicit and deliberate focus on use by programme managers is one of the features which sets evaluation apart from research, it also prioritises the viewpoints of programme managers.

Development evaluation and other approaches offer a counterpoint which mandate an emphasis on the “public good”, or the beneficiary result from the evaluation process. However, neither approach, which aligns the evaluation process to a stakeholder interest, sufficiently acknowledges the diversity in perspectives that different role players bring. One is that they are unlikely to be homogenous or static. Another is that the relational aspects are absent. A third, is that they fail to link these group interests to epistemological approaches or worldviews they may reflect. This makes it difficult to interrogate. Discourse from indigenous knowledge systems may be able to contribute to this debate.

One of the primary distinguishing points between evaluation and research is that evaluation fundamentally entails a value judgement, by the determination of a programme’s alignment or appropriateness to a particular values system as fundamental to the field (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). The evaluation literature often comes with an assumption that programmes have a set of stakeholders,

that range from donors to programme managers, agencies and beneficiaries, and that these stakeholders follow a similar ordered epistemological orientation. With the growth of African public sector M&E systems, it is clear that beneficiaries, implementing agencies and management are all dealing with common issues of neo-colonialism. This linear spectrum does not reflect the experiences and reality of class and cosmopolitanism in the region. The challenge thus lays in the development of a shared epistemological identity that enhances shared beliefs in evaluation knowledge.

The relationship between epistemology and identity

Epistemology (the theory of knowledge and justification) provides the philosophical grounding for determining the nature, adequacy and legitimacy of knowledge (BonJour, 2010; Pritchard, 2010; Audi, 2003; Crotty, 1998). It defines the knowledge claims or beliefs (how we know what we know), the basic concepts applied in expression of such beliefs and status to be ascribed to the understandings of research results (Dobson, 2002). Nobles (2006) describes epistemology as a science involving the study of: the nature of reality; how truth is defined; the relationship between the knower, knowing, and the known; what can be known; and what should/could be done with the known. In scientific research, the relationship between the knowing scholar and his or her subject is moderated by epistemology (McDougal, 2014). This study adopts a typology by Audi (2003) that defines knowledge as comprising beliefs that are accepted to be true, and are conclusively justified at any given time, i.e. conclusively justified true beliefs.

Identity can geneally be defined as whom or what someone is (the view of self), the various meanings people can attach to themselves, or the meanings attributed by others (Beijaard, 1995). Identities are the shared social meanings that persons attribute to themselves (Burke & Reitzes, 1991:242). According to Stets and Burke (2000), a key characteristic of the self is that it is reflexive, can take itself as an object and can categorise, classify, or name itself in particular ways in relation to other social categories or classifications. This self-categorisation forms identity. According to Hogg and Abrahams (1998), a social identity is a person's knowledge that they belong to a social category or group, i.e. a set of individuals with a common social identification or same social category. The main processes involved in social identity formation are self-categorisation, social comparison, intergroup relations and self-enhancement motivation (Stets & Burke, 2000:225).

The nexus between epistemology and identity is at the core of this chapter. In exploring this nexus, the chapter borrows theoretical constructs of epistemological identity theory (EIT). According to Demerath (2006), EIT explains how individuals enhance their knowledge of self and the world by creating and maintaining identities. Within the context of this chapter, therefore, commitment by evaluators to various identity variables is assumed to be fundamental in creating knowledge rooted in African epistemic foundations. The African-rooted epistemology should be grounded in the history, philosophy, and culture of classical Africa while also embracing the new challenges and transformations that characterise Africa (Hall, 2010). Identities are always in transition as a result of continuous learning, and EIT assumes that this transitional process is for epistemological reasons. EIT explains the epistemological value of identity as a means of organising knowledge and experience (Demerath, 2006:498). It is assumed that an identity creates patterns and perceptions that create beliefs or 'order' by evaluators and motivation to maintain those beliefs.

This chapter assumes variables for epistemological identity to include professional identity, country of birth and residence, years of experience in evaluation, levels of education and specialised training in evaluation. These play a pivotal role in shaping evaluation epistemologies. Methodological and evaluation practice-based decision-making and particular knowledge-based practices are deeply intertwined with an individual's meaning-making process and internal value system. Thus, this chapter explores evaluation epistemology issues as a function of the individual evaluator's perceptions of himself/herself and of the evaluation profession.

Conceptual framing – exploring epistemological identity

The theoretical debates outlined above inform the conceptual framework for this chapter. As described in Figure 7.1, this chapter assumes that knowledge from NMESs is directly linked to the epistemology of the public sector and other players within the NMES. On the other hand, the epistemology of the public sector is affected by the identity of evaluation managers and practitioners. We assume that epistemological identity is fundamental in generating knowledge and results from NMESs that are relevant to the African context, enhancing the utilisation of such knowledge by policy makers. The study explores the identity of evaluation managers and practitioners using data from the African Evaluation Database (AfrED). Although the data may not be exhaustive it will contribute to

painting a picture for a much broader discourse. This chapter explores identity related variables and assesses impacts of those variables on epistemic identity and perceived impacts on knowledge generated from the NMES. This will not only test epistemological identity theory in one particular case, but also help us begin to differentiate between the individual and organisational drivers of epistemology. As we aim to influence NMES practice, understanding this difference will provide crucial insight into what interventions are likely to be the most effective.

Figure 7.1 Mapping of conceptual framework

Methodology

This chapter draws the study population from the African Evaluation Database (AfrED) developed by CLEAR-AA and CREST in 2017. The database builds a reference point for evaluation practice and scholarship in Africa. The first iteration of this database in January 2017 included over 9000 academic journal articles and reports on M&E in Africa in 20 African countries: South Africa, Zimbabwe, Ghana, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Lesotho, Namibia, Swaziland, Botswana, Malawi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Sudan, Togo, Liberia and Mozambique. The names and available contact information of all evaluators and researchers were drawn from the database.

During the period 10 to 29 November 2016, e-mails were sent to 3032 persons identified as individuals involved with evaluations in Africa. Eligible candidates for the survey were obtained from three sources:

- ▶ The documents listed in the African evaluation database were examined and all e-mail details of authors recorded.
- ▶ E-mail details were obtained from the South African, Ethiopian, Ghanaian African Evaluation Associations.
- ▶ E-mails were obtained from CREST's own internal database (previous students of evaluation and a list of various individuals making enquiries).

Based on these sources, 3032 individuals were sent an invitation to participate in the survey. Of these, 426 e-mails returned undelivered and nine individuals indicated that they did not want to participate in the survey. It is, therefore, assumed that around 2597 individuals received the invitation. Each e-mail contained a description of the survey, some information regarding CLEAR and CREST and a request to participate in the survey. In total, 549 individuals indicated their willingness to complete the survey. These 549 individuals were then sent a subsequent e-mail with a link to participate in the survey. A reminder was sent after one week to complete the survey and 421 completed the survey.

On 11 November, the remaining 2051 who had not indicated their willingness to participate were e-mailed a link to the survey, with 139 completing the survey. There were also four individuals who completed the survey through a general link provided. By 4 January (the date on which the survey was closed), a total of 564 individuals had completed the survey (22% response rate). The sample profile indicated that 37% were from South Africa, 55% were male, the majority was between the ages of 30 and 45 years and 75% were in possession of a master's or doctoral degree.

Results

This chapter initiates a conversation on the epistemological orientation of African evaluators. The hope is that, through continued action research in the evaluation space, these discussions will be a starting point for using M&E as a tool for epistemological changes in the public sector. Emergent results so far both reinforce assertions that governments are largely blind to their epistemological orientations, but also call into question the assertions that the evaluation community is the primary constraint in the growth of appropriate

national evaluation systems. It also reinforces the diversity of both individual beliefs and institutional practice across the region, highlighting the challenges with assuming common regional trends. It has found certain correlations between evaluator identity and practice, strengthening the argument that this area of enquiry remains important in understanding the ongoing formation of national evaluation systems.

Embedding African evaluation systems in public management

The growth of M&E in the region is an acknowledgement of the potential of M&E to improve public sector performance. However, it largely does not engage with the possibilities that targets could be set and progress defined differently. Engaging with thinkers on indigenous knowledge systems offers the possibility to provide an alternative method of interrogating public sector priorities and processes. While these views and perspectives should be integrated into planning processes, if evaluation processes and methods draw on indigenous knowledge, these recommendations will increasingly shape target-setting and programme design. This has been acknowledged by the professional evaluator community, through the Made in Africa discussion that has emerged from the African Evaluation Association. However, there has not been an immediate uptake by public sector evaluation systems, in part due to the difficulty bureaucracies face in adopting new ways of working. Results from the survey indicate that 64% of the respondents do not believe that there is a solid Made in Africa body of research. Although considerable efforts are being made through various fora, such as the AfrED database and other voluntary organisations of professional evaluators (VOPEs), there is need for more efforts to move from philosophical debates around what constitutes Made in Africa towards developing and empirically testing African-rooted evaluation approaches and methodologies that take cognisance of African context, culture, history and beliefs.

Professional identity of evaluators

Within the evaluation community, it is virtually taken as a truism that M&E is inextricable from the donor community. As a result, its processes of conceptualisation, priority setting and management are Northern-driven, and both a cause and consequence of this is that evaluation practitioners are largely

not African. Cloete (2016) emphasises this assertion, saying: "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."

While this perception is widely felt by a number of stakeholders and supported by ample anecdotal evidence, it does not seem particularly well supported by the AfrED survey results. Of a population of 3032 evaluators, researchers and evaluation managers, whose contact details were found in the AfrED database, 564 completed the survey. Of those who responded, 64 were born in a country outside of Africa, composed of 17 North Americans, three Australians, 10 respondents from the UK and 26 respondents from the rest of Europe, seven respondents from Asia, and one from South America. Fewer respondents were resident outside of African countries. While this percentage is slightly over 10%, and this is not an inconsequential percentage, it is lower, for example, than the percentage of non-African academic staff at the University of Witwatersrand in South Africa (University of the Witwatersrand, 2015). Due to the cosmopolitan nature of Africa's educated elite and the globalisation of highly skilled professionals, this percentage does not seem to immediately flag a disproportionate problem of the composition of the sector.

It is also important to point out that evaluation was only the primary professional identity of 43% of the survey respondents. While this is not surprising, given the nascent state of the evaluation profession and the tendency of evaluation professionals to have disciplinary backgrounds in other fields, it is still important for an analysis of individual identity. There is a possibility that either identity, or training as an evaluator, comes with a willingness to influence the alignment or orientation of evaluation systems in a way that is different from the way someone identifying as a civil servant, or technical specialist might engage. This could be a matter for further investigation.

Furthermore, of those whose primary professional identity in the M&E space was managing and commissioning evaluations in the public sector, all respondents were of African origin. Furthermore, of all respondents to the survey only 7% hailed from international development agencies. It is possible that further interrogation of the evaluations on the AfrED database will yield that these agencies are commissioning a disproportionate percentage of the evaluations, but this is not immediately apparent. Even if it were to be the case, this would

still have limited bearing on issues specific to planning and target setting within the public sector.

An additional driver of identity in the evaluation space that needs further exploration is that of gender. While evaluation is often a feminised profession, with roots in anthropological research or social work, this is not necessarily currently the case in Africa. Of the AfrED survey respondents, 55% are male, but the majority of respondents are based in South Africa. Of the South African respondents, 63% are female, indicating that the gender balance in other countries is skewed towards male evaluators. This is important both to contextualise evaluation as a profession in Africa and also to understand national specificities and drivers of identity-related dynamics.

The association between professional identity, approaches and methods

it is often asserted in discussions of the African evaluation landscape that there is a relationship between identity and evaluation approaches. This section explores the extent to which this is true by considering the professional identity of evaluators and its link to evaluation approaches and methods. The associations between professional identity and evaluation approaches as well as professional identity and evaluation methods were explored using the X^2 Test for independence at the 95% confidence interval. The results indicate significant associations between professional identity (identity-related variable) as the explanatory variable and methods and approaches as response variables (epistemology-related variables), making a case for further exploration of the implications professional identity of evaluation practitioners has on the evaluation landscape. The variables are further disaggregated to show the various sub-categories of professional identity and the significantly associated sub-categories of evaluation approaches and methods ($P > 0.05$). Results on evaluation approaches indicated that individuals who practised evaluation in any capacity significantly utilised participatory evaluation approaches. Researchers significantly utilised naturalistic evaluations and randomised control trials (RCTs) while managers utilised empowerment and participatory evaluations.

The results on use of evaluation methods show that evaluators at any capacity significantly preferred individual face-to-face interviews, secondary data analysis and stakeholder meetings/consultations. Researcher preferred individual

face-to-face interviews, secondary data analysis, stakeholder consultation and surveys. Those involved in managing evaluations significantly utilised focus group discussions (FGDs), interviews, observations, secondary data analysis, stakeholder consultations, surveys and testing. Trainers were biased towards the same research methods.² Those who commission evaluations preferred FGDs, interviews, observations, secondary data analysis and stakeholder consultations. University faculty members and instructors significantly utilised FGDs, interviews, observations, secondary data analysis, stakeholder consultations and surveys. Students preferred interviews, observations, secondary analysis and stakeholder consultations. Finally, retired experts significantly preferred interviews, secondary data analysis and stakeholder consultations.

These results highlight the importance of professional identity in the selection and utilisation of evaluation methods and approaches. There is a general bias towards the use of qualitative evaluation approaches and methods by African evaluators. Although similar studies are scarce in the evaluation discourse, research from other field such as teaching (Hong, 2010; Alvos & Aylwin, 2007) have established that 'self' is crucial in constructing individual decision-making and the mode of interaction with the environment in a given context. A striking observation is the limited utilisation of RCTs and naturalistic evaluations which are only significantly utilised by researchers. They are normally viewed as highly technical and complicated and associated with the medical profession. According to Togerson (2002), they are the ultimate expression of evaluative research. Such assertions likely lead to biases towards the utilisation of RCTs by certain professional identities, for example, Rowe (2016:8) argues that RCTs is a flawed approach in education since it portrays a wrong understanding of the nature of learning through incommensurability of beliefs around reality and knowledge.

Results from the X^2 Test of independence showed no significant association between the use of RCTs and level of education and specialised training in evaluation. This is contradictory to commonly held perceptions linking the use of RCTs to specialised training in quantitative evaluation methodologies. Such a scenario needs cognisance when promoting quantitative based Made in Africa approaches as it should be noted that education and specialised training

² Test methodologies include functional and non-functional testing to validate the AUT. Examples of testing methodologies are unit testing, integration testing, system testing, performance testing.

do not necessarily affect the choice in use of these approaches perceived as a domain for quantitative oriented evaluators. However there were significant associations ($p < 0.05$) between the use of RCTs and areas of focus for evaluation related work. These areas are economic development ($X^2 = 6.136$; $p = 0.047$), education ($X^2 = 7.249$; $p = 0.027$), environment ($X^2 = 14.148$; $p = 0.001$), health ($X^2 = 8.588$; $p = 0.014$), sanitation ($X^2 = 11.155$; $p = 0.003$) and youth development ($X^2 = 9.542$; $p = 0.008$). This indicates an expansion of the use of RCTs into other areas outside the health sector.

There were significant associations between years of experience in evaluation with a number of evaluations methods, including FGDs ($X^2 = 213.149$; $p = 0.000$), secondary data analysis ($X^2 = 99.958$; $p = 0.001$) and surveys ($X^2 = 88.320$; $p = 0.002$). Significant associations were observed between years of experience in evaluation and the use of utilisation focused evaluation ($X^2 = 77.343$; $p = 0.020$). Significant associations were also observed between the highest level of education and use of evaluability assessments ($X^2 = 47.396$; $p = 0.000$) and Programme monitoring ($X^2 = 21.989$; $p = 0.015$). Specialised training in evaluation was significantly associated with the type of evaluations conducted: clarificatory evaluation ($X^2 = 13.490$; $p = 0.009$); economic valuation ($X^2 = 18.432$; $p = 0.001$); impact evaluation ($X^2 = 13.353$; $p = 0.010$); process evaluation ($X^2 = 25.468$; $p = 0.000$) and programme monitoring ($X^2 = 11.504$; $p = 0.021$).

Country of birth, country of residence, methods and approaches

Another discourse found in discussions of the African evaluation landscape, is that evaluation practitioners often come from abroad and use methods and approaches that may not be contextually relevant. While this is obviously a complex and nuanced discussion, the contribution of this chapter is simply to see if there is an empirical basis for a correlation between country of birth, country of residence, and evaluation methods and approaches.

Results indicated no significant association between the country of residence and the use of various methods. However, a significant association was observed between the country of birth and the use of the testing method ($X^2 = 113.506$; $p = 0.048$). Considering evaluation approaches, significant association was observed between country of birth and use of RCTs ($X^2 = 133.497$; $p = 0.000$) and realist evaluation ($X^2 = 111.286$; $p = 0.017$). Significant associations were

also observed between country of residence and the use of RCTs ($X^2_{76}=128.729$; $p=0.000$); realistic evaluation ($X^2_{80}=106.239$; $p=0.027$) and research ($X^2_2=97.601$; $p=0.048$). Country of origin effects are still poorly understood in most disciplines (Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999) and are scarce in the field of evaluation with regards to approaches and methodological choices is a grey area. Country of origin effect has received attention in the field of consumer behaviour, specifically in the area of product evaluation (Verlegh, 2001; Peterson & Jalibert, 1995).

Lessons from such studies suggest that the country of origin may have implications on methodical choices by evaluations in three main domains, namely cognitive, affective and normative. The cognitive dimension asserts that country of origin provides an epistemic cue for approaches and methodological choices while the affective element assumes that the country of origin has symbolic and emotional value to evaluators. The normative dimension asserts that evaluators hold social and personal norms related to country of origin. These factors are enshrined in the socio-economic, social political and epistemological beliefs in the countries of origin. This does suggest that further exploration into evaluators roots and their methodological choices is merited, given that the evidence in the AfrED database does confirm a link between evaluators' country of origin and their selection of evaluation methods and approaches.

Epistemology, identity and implications for national evaluation systems

The hypothesis of this chapter is that the identity of evaluation practitioners would play a key role in the epistemology of NMES in the region and, as a result, will heavily influence public-sector orientation and practice. While the survey results are not conclusive, analysis at this point indicates that this is not categorically the case, but may be relevant in specific situations. It then becomes important to interrogate the relationship between institutions, identity and epistemology. If individual identity is not driving the epistemology of institutions, how are these constructed and how can this be changed?

The AfrED survey offers a few hints about this. One interesting finding is a convergence between professional qualifications as an evaluator and professional careers in evaluation. Of those who received an MA degree in evaluation, 43% consider evaluation their primary professional identity. This correlation between higher-education offerings in evaluation and professional

identity in evaluation indicate that there are important roles institutions for higher education can offer in crafting professional identities, and possibly creating some of the institutional mechanisms for reinforcing them, such as professional associations, journals, etc. This is bolstered by the level of experience reported by respondents to the survey: nearly 70% of evaluators and evaluation commissioners have ten years or less experience in the field demonstrating that evaluation remains a largely emergent profession in the region.

An additional important finding is when asked whether there was a Made in Africa body of research on evaluation that they could identify, 64% did not believe this was the case. While this could possibly be linked to the level of awareness of the approach, these results indicate that there is relatively little interest, ownership, or engagement by evaluation practitioners or commissioners in African epistemological approaches. At the same time, this is contradictory to the experience of the African Evaluation Association annual conference in 2016, where the Made in Africa stream received the most paper submissions and hosted several of the best-attended sessions at the conference. This dilemma needs further investigation.

Conclusion

This chapter explores the epistemological identity of African evaluators within the context of growing focus on NMESs and indigenisation of knowledge within Africa. It is evident that the emergent profession of evaluation in Africa is developing in tandem with public-sector monitoring and evaluation systems. Each is driving the other's growth and both are being catalysed by a range of internal and external factors. NMESs are first and foremost a reflection of the existing epistemology of state institutions, through the way planning processes are designed and targets are set and measured. However, they are also opportunities to pivot this belief system and realign an institution to more appropriate knowledge systems. It was observed that NMESs are evolving with a trajectory of indigenisation of knowledge from a Eurocentric focus towards African-rooted knowledge systems.

This chapter utilises data from a survey conducted using contacts from the AfrED database. Three research questions were addressed: (a) Are most evaluators undertaking evaluations in Africa from the West?; (b) What are the

perceptions on the Made in Africa Evaluation approaches?; and (c) What is the association between various attributes of identity and choice of methodological approaches by African evaluators? While the held belief in the monitoring and evaluation fraternity is that most evaluators are from the North, results from this study showed a pattern contrary to these assertions. Results indicated that a majority of the respondents (64%) did not believe in a unique, Made in Africa approach to evaluation practice. This is understandable given the nascent nature of the evaluation profession and the epistemic beliefs of most of the evaluators coming from common training background. This highlights the need for more innovative approaches to better understand a Made in Africa agenda, to allow meaningful strides in the decolonisation of evaluation knowledge discourse.

Results indicated significant associations amongst professional identity, approaches and methods. For example, results on evaluation approaches indicated that individuals who practised evaluation in any capacity significantly utilised participatory evaluation approaches. Researchers significantly utilised naturalistic evaluations and randomised control trials (RCTs) while managers utilised empowerment and participatory evaluations. Results on methods, for example, indicated that evaluators at any capacity significantly preferred individual face-to-face interviews, secondary data analysis and stakeholder meetings/consultations. Researchers preferred individual face-to-face interviews, secondary data analysis, stakeholder consultations and surveys. These results highlighted the importance of professional identity in the selection and utilisation of evaluation methods and approaches. There is a general bias towards the use of qualitative evaluation approaches and methods by African evaluators, which was confirmed by the study. These findings tend to suggest that efforts to promote the Made in Africa Evaluation agenda might need to make deliberate efforts on promoting approaches with a qualitative epistemological grounding.

Within the indigenisation of evaluation knowledge discourse, two challenges need to be addressed. The first challenge is the integration of indigenous knowledge in M&E to extend beyond a tool for professional practitioners and rather be integrated by all stakeholders in the evaluation process. The most pivotal element of this is setting targets and looking at results in a way that acknowledges contextually relevant development pathways. Another essential component is to integrate training on contextually relevant values

and management systems into burgeoning higher-education offerings in monitoring and evaluation. This should include action research about which methods, tools and approaches are most contextually relevant, and how they can be piloted and refined according to an indigenous values system. The second challenge is to continue to rigorously interrogate these shifts in practice and perspective, to better understand the extent to which this changes results. The M&E field is in a place with so much momentum that it is possible to build an empirical basis for both the need and impact that a foundation of indigenous knowledge would have on monitoring and evaluation systems and the subsequent programme outcomes.

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