“MADE-IN-AFRICA EVALUATION – Reflections on Deepening M&E Practices in Ghana”

Dr. Sulley Gariba

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QUICK QUIZ

WHAT IS EVALUATION IN YOUR NATIVE LANGUAGE?
To start off this reflection:

• Explore the boundless opportunities of evaluation as a discipline, which we can learn, but also one which we can create.
• Explore the differences between the thinking or theory, methods and approaches are used in evaluation.
• Introduce you to assumptions underpinning basic concepts of evaluation.
• Review different components of evaluation theory.
• Relate these to the emergence of “Made in Africa Evaluation”
What is the Theoretical Basis of Evaluation?

• Theory connotes a body of knowledge that organizes, categorizes, describes, predicts, explains, and otherwise assist us in understanding any topic, issue or developmental consideration.

• Evaluation theory consists:

Social or development policy component – simply put: the Project

• Knowledge component
• Value component
• Use component
• Practice component
The Project or Policy: Social & Development Policy or Project to be Evaluated

• Objectives and associated design -- Internal policy structure and functioning – What is the policy or Project and its significance?
• External constraints that shaped and constrain policy or project
• Theory of Change/Logic -- How social change occurs, how conditions of the poor change, and how this change contributes to overall social, economic and policy change and development.
Knowledge Component of Evaluation – How African is it?

• Theories of knowledge make 3 assumptions:

  • **About Ontology** – what is the nature of reality? An evaluator arrives at your project, first time in Africa, but is already pregnant with their own ontology

  • **About Epistemology** – what are the justifications for knowledge claim? –

  • **About methodology** – how do we construct knowledge? What assumptions do we make? How do we construct indicators to gather evidence?

• The first two are rarely discussed; often we jump to methods.
Value Component of Evaluation Theory

• **Meta-theory** – Understanding the nature of, and justification for valuing things. Who is considered poor? How do you identify wealth or progress?

• **Prescriptive theory** – theory that advocates the primacy of particular values – eg: consumption value – people living under $1/day are below poverty line

• **Descriptive theory** – theory that describes values without advocating one as the best.
Use Component of Evaluation Theory

• A description of possible kinds of use
• A description of the time frame in which use occurs
• An explanation of what the evaluator can do to facilitate use

• Different kinds of Use:
  • Instrumental Use
  • Conceptual Use
Practice Component of Evaluation Theory

This is the part of evaluation that most of us who are evaluators get involved in. It entails:

• What questions will be asked
• What design will be used
• What activities will be carried out to facilitate use
• What significant changes are going to occur as a result of the evaluation exercise?
WHAT THEN IS “MADE IN AFRICA EVALUATION”? 

EVALUATION THAT IS: 
• ROOTED IN AFRICAN “THINKING” AND PHILOSOPHY  
• RELYING ON AFRICAN VALUE SYSTEMS – THE MORE POSITIVE ONES  
• PROVIDING VOICE FOR AFRICA’S VULNERABLE AND VOICELESS  
• SERVING TO TRANSFORM PEOPLES’ LIVES  
• FABRICATING METHODS, APPROACHES AND TOOLS THAT ARE MEANINGFUL FOR AFRICANS AND UNDERSTOOD BY US  
• YET, CONTRIBUTING TO UNIVERSAL KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE
MAJOR QUESTION & DILEMMA:
AFRICAN EVALUATION OR EVALUATION IN AFRICA?

• African Knowledge Systems as a basis for Evaluation Theory
• African Values and means of establishing valuation: how do we interpret the vision espoused in some of our constitutions – people come first; directives provided in the constitution
• Purpose of Evaluation -- How do African evaluators cope with the challenges posed by the need to use evaluation as a tool for transformation, not just as ex-post assessment
• Who commissions these evaluations?
• How and with what standards and ethics are we conducting Evaluation in Africa
• What Uses do we put to our evaluation endeavor
Theory-base for African Evaluation

• Mobilizing African Evaluation “think-tanks”, academics and practitioners to:
  
  • Conduct research on indigenous knowledge systems that have bearing on evaluation. Much of the most profound history that have shaped & distorted our development is still rather oral

  • Publish epistemology and ontology of African Evaluation

  • Define ethics and standards for evaluation that satisfies Africa’s historical past and its cultural realities and specificities
Evaluation for Transformation

• For most of Africa, we cannot afford evaluation that merely registers “causality” for the sake of proving program “impacts” ex-post facto

• Our citizens cannot wait, they need to be engaged in assessments that empower them to address the causes of failure and propel their energies for policy, program and budget reforms in a manner that real jobs are created and sustained, and that wealth is created and more equitably distributed.

What are the tools for this transformative evaluation that is rooted in Africa? – Prof. Millar will explore some of these as part of our reflection today
On the Demand-side: Empowering New Commissioners

• Governments leading demand evaluation (NOT DONORS) – In Ghana, we now have a Ministry for Monitoring & Evaluation, in addition to the National Development Planning Commission

• Parliamentary systems for Evaluating Performance and feeding these into Government Budget Reviews

• Civil Society engagement in assessing public policies and partnering with all the above – Government and Parliament

• Continental systems for independent evaluation of Country Performance – APRM and the popular dissemination of findings
On the Supply-side: Growing New African Evaluators and Associations – Dr. Kingsley will educate us more