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Finding a Way Together

What does a transformed African evaluation practice look like to you?

A preview of a transformed African evaluation practice: A transition from a standardised evaluation practice

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Evaluation models in Africa have for an extended period reflected those that originate outside the continent. Therefore, it seems a good notion to start transforming the African evaluation practice by assessing existing models that are to a large, if not complete, extent based on western practices. Numerous researchers and authors have highlighted the fact that transformation of evaluation practices, entails different factors that need to be considered. These include, but are not limited to, decolonising African evaluation and evaluators, evaluating current prevailing models, especially those that are of western descent and lastly, develop evaluation models that are based solely on African principles, political climate, values, socio-cultural and economic conditions. From analysing the factors considered by numerous researchers, the question that this opinion piece begs to answer is "if following any of these steps can be deemed enough to transform evaluation practices and what the future of a transformed African evaluation practice entail"?

The disconnect between what is considered as optimal in Africa and western is dire but in order for a paradigm shift, another factor that needs to be considered in the decolonization of evaluation practices is if the proposed African-based evaluation practices would offer substantial differences from those that are of western origin. Part of the main arguments that further support the decolonization of evaluation practices are the need to develop evaluation practices that draws most of its concepts from a holistic African perspective, also linking other fields such as indigenous knowledge. In essence, the decolonization of evaluation practices serves a basis to examine the benefits and drawbacks of practices that will be more functional for the continent.

The evaluation of existing models involves assessing and changing existing theories, concepts and ideologies. A majority of theories surrounding evaluation are dominated by theories that are from highly developed countries, which is a total opposite of what the African society is. In utopia, the evaluation of existing models should be guided by factors such as the different types of evaluation, the role players that are involved in evaluation and how most evaluation practices are mostly undertaken due to funders requiring evaluation reports. Taking those factors into consideration likely addresses the need to understand the power dynamics that influence these evaluation models.

The development of evaluation practices sorely developed in Africa can be achieved through taking into consideration the need for evaluation practices to be decolonised and the evaluation of existing models. These models require the need to be built using holistic decolonised philosophy. Additionally, the formulation of new evaluation practices has to take into consideration the different needs of the countries that form a part of the African continent and how these new models will incorporate the position of African institutions, African evaluators and other role players, as that will help reinforce the need for evaluation practices developed in Africa.

Do these steps offer enough towards the ongoing conversation for a change in evaluation practices? There is no unequivocal answer to this question yet these steps contribute to changing the on-going conversation for the transformation of evaluation practices to be sorely focused on the needs of the African continent. In addition, such steps contribute towards a different future outlook of evaluation practices. Ideally, in the future evaluation practices will be dominated by Made in Africa policies, with its main role players being people who are from the African continent and for evaluation itself, being compulsory when it comes to projects rather than it being undertaken when requested by project funders.

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