African Evaluation Journal
ISSN: (Online) 2306-5133, (Print) 2310-4988

Decolonising and indigenising evaluation practice in Africa: Roadmap for mainstreaming the Made in Africa Evaluation approach

Authors:
Ayabulela Dlakavu[1,2]
Jabulani Mathebula[1,3,4]
Samukelisiwe Mkhize[1,5]

Affiliations:
[1]Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results – Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA), Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

[2]Department of Politics and International Relations, Faculty of Humanities, University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg, South Africa

[3]South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association, Johannesburg, South Africa

[4]Agricultural Economics Association of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa

[5]World Food Programme, Johannesburg, South Africa

Corresponding author:
Ayabulela Dlakavu,
ayabulela.dlakavu@wits.ac.za

Dates:
Received: 15 Feb. 2022
Accepted: 13 July 2022
Published: 22 Aug. 2022

Background: 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.

Objectives: This article endeavours to provide 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.

Method: The study is qualitative by design, employing document analysis and the authors' observation on development and evaluation practice in Africa and globally.

Results: 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.

Conclusion: 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

How to cite this article: Dlakavu, A., Mathebula, J. & Mkhize, S., 2022, 'Decolonising and indigenising evaluation practice in Africa: Roadmap for mainstreaming the Made in Africa Evaluation approach', *African Evaluation Journal* 10(1), a620. https://doi.org/10.4102/aej.v10i1.620

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 article 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 article 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 article 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 article 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, policymaking and implementation, which could induce better development outcomes and a decent life for African populations. The article 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.

The methodological approach of the article

The article 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 guiding the article

This conceptual framework gives an account of various knowledge systems or sources of epistemology. 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 article'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).

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 article'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.

What is meant by the concept 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).

Decolonialisation 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'.

Decolonisation in 'evaluation' discourse and practice (i.e. Made in Africa Evaluation)

The 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 legal 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 unequal 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 decolonised evaluation practice a feasible ideal or utopian philosophy?

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.

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 the Development Evaluation Training in Africa (DETA) offered by the Centre for Learning on Evaluations and Results-Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA) at the University of Witwatersrand and the 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.

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 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.

Involve 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 evaluation preplanning evaluability assessment, 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 (CBM) 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 CBM 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.

There is, however, a long way to go to transform these community accountability structures, 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. 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 commitment 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 is 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.

Acknowledgements

The authors wish to thank the Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results – Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA) staff who provided input into the draft paper.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Authors' contributions

A.D., J.M. and S.M. all contributed to the conceptualisation, analysis and refinement of this draft article.

Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

Funding information

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

Data availability

All sources used in this article are available upon request.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the authors.

References

Balaam, D.N. & Dillman, B., 2014, *Introduction to International Political Economy,* 5th edn., Pearson, Edinburgh.

Bowen, G.A., 2009, 'Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method', *Qualitative Research Journal* 9(2), 27–40. https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027

Caffentzis, G., 2002, 'Neoliberalism in Africa, apocalyptic failures and business as usual practices', *Turkish Journal of International Relations* 1(3), 89–104.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018, *Data collection methods for program evaluation: Observation*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Atlanta, GA.

Chawane, M., 2016, 'The development of Afrocentricity: A historical survey', *Yesterday&Today (online)* 16, 78–99. http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2223-0386/2016/n16a5

Chilisa, B., 2015, *A synthesis paper on the Made in Africa evaluation concept*, African Evaluation Association, Accra.

Chilisa, B., Major, T.E., Gaotlhobogwe, M. & Mokgolodi, H., 2016, 'Decolonizing and indigenizing evaluation practice in Africa: Toward African relational evaluation approaches', *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation* 30(3). https://doi.org/10.3138/cjpe.30.3.05

Chilisa, B., Major, T.E., & Khudu-Petersen, K., 2017, 'Community engagement with a postcolonial, African-based relational paradigm', *Qualitative Research* 17(3), 326–339. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794117696176

Chirau, T.J., Waller, C. & Blaser-Mapitsa, C., 2018, *The National Evaluation Policy landscape in Africa: A comparison*, Twende Mbele, Johannesburg.

Chirau, T.J., Blaser-Mapitsa, C., Amisi, M., Masilela, B. & Dlakavu, A., 2020, 'A stakeholder view of the development of national evaluation systems in Africa', *Africa Evaluation Journal* 8(1), a504. https://doi.org/10.4102/aej.v8i1.504

Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S., 2005, *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*, 3rd edn., Sage, London.

Du Toit, N.B., 2018, 'Decolonising development? Re-claiming Biko and a black theology of liberation within the context of faith based organisations in South Africa', *Missionalia* 46(1), 24–35. https://doi.org/10.7832/46-1-219

Easton, P.B., 2012, 'Identifying the Evaluative Impulse in Local Culture: Insights from West African Proverbs' *American Journal of Evaluation* 33(4), 515–531. https://doi.org/10.1177/1098214012447581

Frehiwot, M., 2019, *Decolonizing evaluation in Africa*, eVALUation Matters Third Quarter 2019, African Development Bank Group, Abidjan.

Gelas, R., 2014, 'The new public management in Africa', *Public Policy and Administration Research* 4(4), 85–96.

Goldman, I., 2018, *The emergence of government evaluation systems in Africa: The case of Benin, Uganda and South Africa*, eVALUation Matters Second Quarter 2018, Africa Development Bank, Abidjan.

Gray, M. & Coates, J., 2010, '"Indigenization" and knowledge development: Extending the debate', *International Social Work* 53(5), 613–627. https://doi.org/10.1177/0020872810372160

Johnston-Goodstar, K., 2012, 'Decolonizing evaluation: The necessity of evaluation advisory groups in Indigenous evaluation', *New Directions for Evaluation* 2012(136), 109–117. https://doi.org/10.1002/ev.20038

Kessi, S., Marks, Z. & Ramugondo, E., 2020, 'Decolonising African Studies', *Critical African Studies* 12(3), https://doi.org/10.1080/21681392.2020.1813413

Kuhn, T.S., 1962, *The structure of scientific revolutions*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL.

LaFrance, J. & Nichols, R., 2008, 'Reframing evaluation: Defining an indigenous evaluation framework', *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation* 23(2), 13–31.

Levers, M.D., 2013, *Philosophical paradigms, Grounded theory, and perspectives on emergence*, viewed 31 March 2015, from http://sgo.sagepub.com/content/3/4/2158244013517243.

Martin, G., 2009, 'Theories of the African State', in *A new paradigm of the African State,* pp. 11–22, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, NY.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2020, *What is a knowledge system?,* viewed 06 June 2022, from https://gssd.mit.edu/knowledge-system.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S.J., 2013, 'Perhaps decoloniality is the answer? Critical reflections on development from a decolonial epistemic perspective', *Africanus* 43(2), 1–12.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S.J., 2018, 'The dynamics of epistemological decolonisation in the 21st century: Towards epistemic freedom', *Strategic Review of Southern Africa* 40(1), a268. https://doi.org/10.35293/srsa.v40i1.268

Said, E.W., 1993, *Culture and Imperialism*, Chatto and Windus, London.

Smith, L., Bedu-Addo, D., Awal, M. & Mensah, A., 2020, 'The contribution of civil society generated evidence to the improvement of sanitation services in Ghana' in Goldman, I. & Pabari, M. (eds.). *Using evidence in policy and practice*. Routledge, New York.

Smith, T., 1999, *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*, Zed Books, London.

Tanyanyiwa, V.I., 2019, 'Indigenous knowledge systems and the teaching of climate change in Zimbabwean Secondary Schools', *SAGE Open* 9(4). https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244019885149

Tavernaro-Haidarian, L., 2019, 'Decolonization and development: Reimagining key concepts in education', *Research in Education* 103(1), 19–33. https://doi.org/10.1177/0034523719839750

Tirivanhu, P., Robertson, H., Waller, C. & Chirau, T., 2018, 'Assessing evaluation education in African tertiary education institutions: Opportunities and reflections', *South African Journal of Higher Education* 32(4), 229–244. https://doi.org/10.20853/32-4-2527

Von Bismarck, H., 2012, *Defining decolonization*, The British Scholar Society, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh.

Walter, M. & Suina, M., 2018, 'Indigenous data, indigenous methodologies and indigenous data sovereignty', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 22(3), 233–243. https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2018.1531228

Watera, J., 2019, *Indigenizing citizen-based M&E mechanisms in Africa: Lessons from Uganda's barazas*, African Development Bank, Abidjan.

Willis, J.W., 2007, *Foundations of qualitative research: Interpretative and critical approaches*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.

World Bank, 2020, *Data collection in fragile states*, viewed 14 Febraury 2022, from https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/publication/data-collection-in-fragile-states.