Since the International Year of Evaluation in 2015 (EvalYear) and the launch of the Global Evaluation Agenda (EvalAgenda 2020) in 2016, Young and Emerging Evaluators (YEEs) have progressively conquered a place within the global evaluation community and have increasingly contributed to shaping the global evaluation culture. In doing so, they have positioned themselves as a new generation of advocates for what we could call a “youth-participatory evaluation culture”, one that harnesses the values and skills that youth and YEEs can bring to the evaluation table, and where the role of young evaluators is defined as one of collaborator and co-leader. We believe that such a culture should be promoted in 2020 and beyond, and we call on all African YEEs who identify as professionals and who value social change to join forces with us. Together, we can fuel a movement towards the achievement of a global youth-participatory evaluation culture.
Key Messages

- YEEs are gaining an increased interest within the global evaluation community; multiple national, regional and international Voluntary Organizations for Professional Evaluation (VOPEs) are pursuing initiatives to bring the ideas and perspectives of evaluation novices into their work and into the global evaluation culture.

- YEEs have organized themselves to take ownership of the EvalAgenda 2020 and have brought specific youth values and skills to the table; they are now pushing for increased youth participation in evaluation and advocating for a move from evaluation on youth to evaluation with and by youth.

- In the era of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and youth activism, the emergence of a youth-participatory evaluation culture holds interesting opportunities for African YEEs, who could consider exploring ways to build a ‘Made in Africa Evaluation’ that incorporates principles of “youth-participatory evaluation”.

Introduction

In 2014, EvalPartners, the global movement to strengthen national and civil society’s evaluation capacities, started a global, multi-stakeholder consultative process to brainstorm on the development of a Global Evaluation Agenda for 2016-2020, which we now call “EvalAgenda 2020” (EvalPartners, 2016). This document, which is believed to be the “first ever long-term global vision for evaluation”, defines priorities for evaluation during the first five years of the 15-year period addressed by the new SDGs. The United Nations calls for a rigorous review of progress towards the global goals, “based on evidence and informed by country-led evaluations” (United Nations, 2015), and the EvalAgenda 2020 promotes the establishment of this strong enabling environment for evaluation, in order to achieve a “positive, broad-based global evaluation culture”. In doing so, it invites all stakeholders to take “widespread ownership of the agenda”, building upon the idea that evaluators should become global advocates for their profession.

In this article, we suggest that African YEEs have organized themselves to take ownership of the EvalAgenda 2020 and play an increasing role in the promotion of a global evaluation culture on the continent. In doing so, YEEs have positioned themselves as advocates for the professionalization and the institutionalization of evaluation as an essential management and social change instrument in the SDGs era. We assert that African YEEs, along with peers from across the globe, have contributed to shaping the current global evaluation culture, by bringing specific values and skills to the table and by pushing for increased youth participation in evaluation (Montrosse-Moorhead et al., 2019). As a result, we may be witnessing the emergence of what can be called a “youth-participatory evaluation culture” and we invite African YEEs to remain engaged in order to further contribute to the shaping and strengthening of such an evaluation culture in 2020 and beyond.
Launched by EvalPartners in 2015, EvalYouth is a global network established to promote engagement, innovation and exchange on evaluation among YEEs, youth stakeholders and other key actors. It was created with the aim to address two major ongoing issues facing the global evaluation community: one, the need for appropriate representation and participation from all stakeholders, including from youth (who are frequently absent from evaluations of policies and programs that impact them); and two, the need to build a pool of skilled evaluators in order to secure the production of high-quality evaluations of SDGs-related initiatives. EvalYouth’s overall purpose is to “support YEEs to become technically sound, experienced and well-networked professionals who contribute to evaluation capacity at national, regional and international levels” (EvalPartners, 2016). The network has therefore contributed to highlighting the presence of YEEs in the evaluation field, focusing on work to ensure that capacity development efforts are aligned to the needs and challenges faced by newcomers to the evaluation community.

YEEs are either young evaluators under the age of 35, and/or new evaluators with less than 5 years of experience in evaluation, and/or recent university graduates who are willing to join the evaluation profession, and/or development professionals who have technical knowledge on evaluation and are willing to become evaluation professionals. YEEs enter a robust field, one that requires the acquisition of the specific knowledge, skills and dispositions needed to achieve a standard that constitutes high quality evaluations (Stevahn et al., 2005; Tourmen, 2016). Their professional growth and development entail a continuous learning process over several years of practice, from novice, to emerging to a proficient level.

The EvalAgenda 2020 defines three pillars for the cultivation of evaluation capacity by EvalYouth. All play a role in the achievement of a positive, broad-based global evaluation culture:

- the ENGAGE pillar (political dimension) targets impact through social mobilization with the objective to enable VOPEs,

Figure 1: Who are YEEs?

A new generation of advocates: young and emerging evaluators and the promotion of a global youth-participatory evaluation culture

In the past five years, multiple national, regional and international VOPEs have launched initiatives to bring the ideas and perspectives of YEEs into their work. On the African continent, several YEE networks have gradually been established, of which two regional YEE networks have embraced the EvalAgenda 2020 and embarked on assisting their VOPEs in the promotion and achievement of a global evaluation culture. These two networks are affiliated to the African Evaluation Association (AfrEA) and the Francophone Network of Evaluation, or Réseau Francophone de l’Evaluation in French (RFE). They are both considered as regional chapters of the wider EvalYouth global network and operate with action plans that are aligned to the three pillars described above.

Along with other peer networks from different continents, these two African YEE networks have progressively organized themselves to constitute a global advocacy coalition for the promotion of shared beliefs on the crucial need to gravitate towards a renewed vision of what a global evaluation culture should look like. In doing so, they have contributed to the rise of what four of the founding members of the EvalYouth...
Table 1: Comparative snapshot of regional YEE networks in Africa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Francophone Network of YEEs</th>
<th>AfrEA Network of YEEs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Affiliation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Creation Year</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cooperation Modality</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-South (umbrella network for YEEs based in francophone North and West Africa, francophone Europe and francophone North America).</td>
<td>South-South (umbrella network for YEEs based in any northern, western, eastern, central and southern African country).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coordination</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-year action plans implemented by an 8-member management group relying on YEE champions based in 24 francophone countries both in the Global North and South.</td>
<td>2-year action plan to be implemented by a management group that reports to the AfrEA board and is comprised of 5 pairs of champions for each of the 5 African sub-regions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main Achievements</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Contributions and inputs made to the EvalYouth e-learning agenda (capacity development webinars and virtual conferences)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Increased involvement of YEEs in the governance of national VOPEs (including board membership)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- YEE professionalization strands at the AfrEA and RFE conferences</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Main Challenge(s)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Language barrier (anglophone, francophone and lusophone YEEs)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Securing ongoing funding for YEE activities</td>
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</table>

A new generation of advocates: young and emerging evaluators and the promotion of a global youth-participatory evaluation culture

In their enlightening and somewhat provocative piece recently published in an IDEAS flagship publication on evaluation and transformational change, our EvalYouth colleagues define youth-participatory evaluation as: “the process of involving young people in conducting evaluations. It includes the participation of young people in different roles (evaluation managers, evaluators, evaluation reference group members, and informants) in all phases of an evaluation (preparatory phase, design phase, data collection phase, analysis and reporting phase, and facilitation of use and dissemination phase).” The purpose of such an evaluation approach is: “to empower young people, to recognize their potential, and to acknowledge their legitimate and unique perspectives by meaningfully and sustainably engaging them in evaluation and by focusing on issues that affect their lives. In short, it moves evaluation from being framed as something that is done to young people to evaluation with or by young people” (Montrosse-Moorhead et al., 2019).

The implications of such an approach in terms of evaluation practice are summarized in the following illustration.

What does this mean for African YEEs willing to further engage in advocating for the promotion of a global evaluation culture that would value the full potential of young people and would grant YEEs a seat at the table as equal partners?

We believe that YEEs should consider:

- Sharpening their advocacy skills in order to influence decision-makers to increase the demand and supply for youth-participatory evaluation. As stated in a flagship toolkit on advocating for evaluation (Karkara and al. 2014), “establishing an enabling environment for evaluation is as much a political exercise as an issue of developing technical
A new generation of advocates: young and emerging evaluators and the promotion of a global youth-participatory evaluation culture.

Figure 4: Modalities for youth participation in evaluation

01 Business as usual

**Young people as informant** FOR an evaluation
- Limited youth engagement
- Youth are consulted and give feedback
- Youth have no power in the decision-making process

02 Sometimes

**Young people as advisors** FOR an evaluation
- Specific youth engagement
- Youth work with evaluators and contribute to a specific area
- Youth do not contribute to decision-making, except for that specific area

03 Rarely

**Young people as co-evaluators** IN an evaluation
- More important youth engagement
- Youth and seasoned evaluators work as a team to envision, design and implement
- Youth share decision-making power throughout evaluation process

04 Almost never

**Young people as leaders** OF an evaluation
- Maximal youth engagement
- Youth envision, design and implement and seasoned evaluators coach and facilitate
- Youth hold all of the decision-making power throughout evaluation process

Source: Designed by the authors based on the data included in Montrosse-Moorhead et al. (2019) and Checkoway B., Richards-Schuster K. (2003).

As we currently have the largest generation of young people in human history, with African youth aged below 35 now representing nearly 75% of Africa’s population, members of YEE networks should build their ability to advocate for the mainstreaming of youth-participatory evaluation. They can do so by drawing from a substantial body of literature that will nurture their narrative regarding the benefits of youth-participation for evaluation quality, for young people as individuals, for the communities in which youth reside, for organizations that conduct or commission youth-participatory evaluations, etc.

Exploring ways to build a ‘Made in Africa Evaluation’ that incorporates principles of youth-participatory evaluation. Montrosse-Moorhead et al. (2019) have underlined that because of their values, YEEs favor an evaluation culture that seeks diversity and inclusivity and “are not methodologically dogmatic” but rather “tend to embrace mixed methods and contextually responsive approaches”. As we are seeing the rise of culturally responsive evaluation and indigenous perspectives in evaluation, we believe that YEE networks in Africa should consider joining the call for a ‘Made in Africa Evaluation’ by offering a viewpoint from the youth perspective on the local values, assumptions and practices that should underpin this concept.

Accelerating exchange and transfer of innovative ideas between YEE networks across the African continent. We believe that African YEEs have all the necessary components in hand.
to achieve that acceleration, as they possess skills that are specific to youth, such as technological savviness and connectivity, and can easily use social and media outlets to collaborate in a more sustained way. We encourage YEE networks to build stronger alliances amongst themselves as well as with other equity and social justice-focused groups operating at their local, national or regional levels. We hope they can find cutting-edge technological solutions to the language barriers they might face in order to exchange from one sub-region of the continent to the other, and we also hope to welcome more lusophone YEEs within the African YEE movement (De Morais Sarmento et al., 2019).

Conclusion

As much as young people constitute a specific segment of the global society, YEEs are now starting to form a specific segment of the global evaluation community. As we move towards 2020 and beyond, YEEs will bear an increasingly important responsibility for the evaluation of interventions related to the SDGs. The United Nations public outreach website dedicated to the SDGs lists five potential roles young people can play in the overall effort to achieve these global goals. We would like to call on all African YEEs to consider joining the movement to further fuel the “revolution in the making”, and, by doing so, to reflect on the type of role they might want to play as young evaluators for the development of advocacy strategies that will contribute to strengthening an enabling environment for evaluation based on a youth-participatory evaluation culture. Will they be critical thinkers, who identify and challenge existing power structures and barriers to change, and expose contradictions and biases? Will they be change-makers, engaged in youth-activism and the mobilization of their peers and other stakeholders? Will they be innovators, offering new ideas and alternative solutions? Will they be communicators, spreading ideas to their peers and communities at the local level, as well as across countries and regions? Will they be leaders, driving change in their communities and countries? Or will they even go beyond the scope of this frame?

We are highly confident that the growing pan-African YEE movement, stirred by the power of group genius and collaboration, will be a major contributor to the achievement of a global youth-participatory evaluation culture in 2020 and beyond.
Endnotes

1. This article draws on two presentations delivered during a panel session on YEEs held at the International Development Evaluation Association (IDEAS) Global Assembly in Prague in October 2019. During this session, representatives of five YEE networks affiliated to different regional VOPEs reflected on the extent to which their activities have contributed to the realization of the EvalAgenda 2020 objectives, and on the opportunities that exist or can be created for YEEs to increase youth participation in the field of evaluation. We delivered our presentations respectively on behalf of the Francophone Network of YEEs (Réseau Francophone des Évaluateurs Emergents) and of the AfrEA Network of YEEs. We were both granted an IDEV/AIDB bursary to attend this Global Assembly, respectively as Northern and Southern African YEEs. We wish to express our sincere gratitude and thanks to IDEV and IDEAS for their support.


3. AfrEA is a regional umbrella organization for African national VOPEs. It serves as a leading source of knowledge for individual evaluators in countries where national evaluation associations do not exist. www.afreao.org

4. RFE is a transnational umbrella organization for francophone national VOPEs located in both the Global North and South (North America, Western Europe, North Africa, West Africa). Its purpose is to strengthen evaluation capacities in the Francophone area and develop a technical evaluation knowledge corpus in French. www.rfevaluation.org

5. To name a few regional networks: EvalYouth Latin America and Caribbean, EvalYouth Eastern Europe and Central Asia, EvalYouth Asia, YEE network of the European Evaluation Society. These regional networks are supplemented by several national YEE networks affiliated to national VOPEs all over the world. At the global level, IDEAS has also recently integrated a YEEs Thematic Interest Group within the scope of its work.

6. Designed by authors based on their experiences as active members of the management groups of these two YEE networks.


8. Mentioned by Montrosse-Moorhead et al. (2019). A detailed description of these roles can be found here: https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/youth/

References


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