



Elements of analysis for an African curriculum in development evaluation training

In Africa, there is a real demand for training in evaluation. But the analysis of the system of actors reveals a strong dependency of the continent on public development aid. As a result of changes in normative frameworks among donors, evaluation practices vary. In the era of SDGs where development requires in-depth knowledge of contexts and issues, this article provides elements of analysis in favor of relevant and coherent curricula for evaluators.

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Introduction

THE globalization of Evaluation of Public Policies is taking place, together with the emergence of national evaluation associations and the multiplication of specialized private offices. The trend is underpinned by a tangible international movement towards institutionalization. To this end, some countries have already given public policy evaluation a constitutional status.

Africa, thanks to the work of stakeholders devoted to the cause of evaluation, is also experiencing the effervescence of the trend in evaluation globalization. In only a short period of three months, the author of these lines participated as an expert in three major international meetings.

- The AfDB Evaluation Week (IDEV-AfDB) in Abidjan (7–11 November 2016);
- the 2nd International Forum of Francophone Evaluation Network (RFE) in Marrakech (13–16 December 2016) and
- the 8th AFREA conference in Kampala (27–31 March 2017).

This article is the result of attendance of the events and retrospective thoughts on the needs and challenges for Africa in terms of evaluation with the backdrop of the 2030 SDG Agenda.

Initially, the World Bank, UNDP, UNICEF and the OECD–DAC were the major precursors. Subsequently, the AfDB emerged to play a leading role. Today, the AfDB contributes significantly to the dissemination of the culture of evaluation through its specialized IDEV (Independent Development Evaluation) department.

There is a strong demand for training in evaluation among stakeholders. The evocative name of "Emerging Evaluators (EE)" is one of the groups with high expectations in terms of qualifying training. Essentially young academics, members of the group wish to increase their skills and acquire a professional degree. The training would take into account the specificities of the continent in terms of culture and the nature of needs in Africa.

The underlying issues

The training currently on offer is almost exclusively reserved for technical and financial partners (TFP). African actors rely heavily on their TFPS, both in terms of technical knowledge and finance. Indeed, if the national evaluation associations work, they owe it to grants, fellowships, training workshops, forums and conferences funded by their TFPS.

The following extract illustrates the deep-rooted dependence of evaluation stakeholders on TFP. ▶

► *"Our research has shown that there is no real demand for capacity building in evaluation in the countries of the South. The demand was clearly coming from development aid agencies, who saw evaluation as a positive reform for the countries of the South. The countries receiving aid were then strongly encouraged to replicate this request and to introduce evaluation as an object of policy reform in their national development plans. As part of the incentive, commitments to aid by States were conditioned by the setting up of evaluation systems. The development of evaluation capacity was part of the package of institutional reforms that donors were proposing to recipient countries to achieve what they considered to be a minimum level of good governance to ensure the effectiveness of aid programs. (Laporte, C., 2015, p.243–244)*

In Africa, evaluation has therefore emerged in the context of public aid, in the intellectual and financial hold of donors from the North by means of cooperation agencies.

However, we know that the history of public aid to Africa is marked by a succession of failures and reorientations. It is also known that among the causes of failure attributable to the North is the irrelevance of the underlying development theories. Finally, while some reorientations of public aid have been dictated by the inefficiency of the programs, others have been changed according to the motivations of donors.

Thus, the observer who witnesses this effervescence in African evaluation circles can legitimately fear that the curriculum of training in evaluation will reproduce the same patterns of failure.

Historical revelations

Historical background work has shown that evaluative practices in the cooperation sector have evolved cyclically in response to changes in public aid policies. Depending on donor vision and organizational and contextual constraints, the evaluators of aid programs and policies have alternately favored different approaches and methodologies.

- **1960–1970.** Evaluation is designed for learning purposes.
- **The 1980s.** After the neo-liberal turn of events, preoccupied with assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of aid policies in the context of the Washington consensus, quantitative approaches were favored.
- **In the mid-1990s.** Following the failure of development aid, the 1980s are referred to as the "lost decade". Social approaches targeting poverty alleviation, strengthening education and health systems, and promoting good governance are implemented with qualitative and participatory approaches. The nascent NPM (New Public Management) approach gives evaluation a function of accountability which favors a management approach to the evaluation of organizational efficiency.
- **The end of the 2000s.** The managerial approach is challenged by beneficiaries and NGOs calling for more partnership and mutual accountability. Qualitative and participatory designs are reintroduced. ►



► A scientific analysis of the development phenomenon

Evaluating development amounts to evaluating the greatest link in intercultural relations between the North and the South. The vitality of indigenous cultures means that, in the face of the social change advocated by development policies, they create "compromise logics". (Rist G., 1985) In the countries of the South, only a scientific analysis of the "development phenomenon" can make the Analysis of Public Policies intelligible and, consequently, its evaluation. The development studies and the analysis of public policies research fields must develop African expertise which can then serve to develop expertise in the *evaluation of public policies*.

Africa, therefore, needs more than simple evaluators capable of designing and conducting evaluations. It needs development analysts / evaluators who are well trained in Development Studies and Public Policy Analysis and well-equipped in public policy evaluation.

Strengthening the stakeholder ecosystem

Universities, state bodies, local authorities, national and regional media all need to be involved in the ecosystem. Currently, with the exception of APNODE (African Parliamentarians' Network on Development Evaluation), national republican institutions and state bodies responsible for public policy have only a weak presence in evaluation networks.

The role of Universities and Institutes of higher education

In addition to the development of research programs, institutions of higher

education should set up Masters in Development Analysis and Evaluation (MAED), structured around teaching modules fed by scientific works from the three fields mentioned above.

From a common core, these modules will lead to three distinct certificates: one, in the *Analysis of Public Policies*; one in *Development Studies* and one in *Public Policy Evaluation*. It will be compulsory to obtain the three certificates, to pass the methodology modules, the practical training course and the thesis. Doctoral studies should also be catered for.

The role of States, Local Governments and Private Firms

The State and local authorities responsible for policy implementation and private practices should be encouraged to make arrangements to accommodate apprentices within the framework of the training program.

Dual training for effective evaluation of the SDGs

The 2030 agenda constitutes a real opportunity for evaluation, which has the support of the international community. It is therefore necessary to seize the opportunity to develop a dual system of vocational training in evaluation. Training for SDG Evaluation, based on an anticipatory "incentive to evaluation" approach, would consist of proposing offers of partner evaluations to program / policy managers who need evaluation in the context of the SDGs.

The partner structures would work together as soon as the evaluation benchmarks are drawn up. The relationship would be "win-win". Partners would find the opportunity to introduce evaluation into their agenda, while, in the spirit ►►

► of Swiss dual training, this collaboration would support the program. The apprentices would be Master students or “emerging evaluators”. The program would be staffed by experts and one or more evaluation bodies that would work together to find the necessary funding, identify the structures that welcome apprentices, develop modules for the theoretical part of the training, supervise practice, evaluate applicants, etc.

Conclusion

In a context where evaluation is recommended by the International Community and has a consensual logical framework, Africa must seize the opportunity to found a continental school of Development Studies and Public Policy Analysis.

This will involve intensifying the stakeholder system through the involvement of universities and state bodies. The innovative approach summarized above would enable us to take on the formidable 2030 agenda evaluation challenge.

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Author's profile

Mourtala Mboup is an expert in development studies and public policy analysis and a graduate of the University and the IHEID of Geneva. Today, he is the President / Founder of BEVALDEV (Development Evaluation Office). He continues to teach Mathematics at the DIP (Direction of Public Instruction) in Geneva and is an independent consultant in Analysis and Evaluation of Public Policies. Previously, Mr. Mboup has worked as Professor of Mathematics in Senegal (graduated from the ENS), Assistant Professor at the University of Geneva and Researcher at the International Center for Migration, Health and Development ", Geneva (ICMHD) Mr. Mboup is the author of a book and several articles.

