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Factors affecting the integration of cultural values into evaluation: Indigenous perspectives

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Background: The debates about embedding cultural evaluative values into evaluation activities have been more dominant among indigenous evaluators in recent years. African indigenous evaluators now hold the view that the continent's mainstream evaluation theories, studies, and practices are profoundly founded in Euro-American ideals and tend to exclude Afrocentric evaluation philosophies.

Objectives: This article discusses some of the obstacles in the integration of indigenous evaluation values into contemporary evaluation theories and methods in Ghana and Africa at large. It describes how Afrocentric ideas, values, norms, relational patterns, and other cultural realities are rooted in evaluation methods, theories, and practices that are often neglected.

Method: Using a qualitative strategy of inquiry grounded in multiple case studies and an indigenously responsive evaluation approach, this article identified and analysed several challenges associated with cultural integration in the evaluation. Several research themes were discussed, including indigenous relational networks, indigenous stakeholders' participation, indigenous information gathering, feedback mechanisms, and the challenges of integrating cultural values into evaluation activities. This article drew from empirical, existing, and documentary data.

Results: This article identified five challenges associated with cultural integration in evaluation activities including indigenous cultural guilt, power dependency, globalisation and localisation, post-colonial legacies, revenue, and urbanisation. This article highlighted that indigenous evaluative values stem from social interactions and relational networks, influenced by exogenous and endogenous factors.

Conclusion: This article concludes that there are several ethical and notional challenges that arise while attempting to incorporate indigenous evaluation values and other socio-cultural philosophies into evaluation theories, methods, and practices.

Contribution: To generate effective and efficient evaluation measurements and outcomes, a synergy between Afrocentric and Euro-American evaluation methodologies, conceptions, and practices would broaden evaluation processes and activities while also deepening the discourse on 'Made in Africa' evaluation.

Keywords: evaluation; culture; indigenously responsive evaluation; indigenous knowledge; Ghana.

Introduction

Evaluations are based on knowledge politics; so, they should be contextualised and culturally suitable in accordance with context-specific values, norms, and other cultural realities. For the indigenous evaluator in Africa, the challenge is to aid in bridging the cultural gap within the evaluation methods, theories, and practices. The notion is that the 'Made in Africa' (MAE) evaluation may not be realised until Afrocentric ideas that focus on evaluative impulses embedded in African values, norms, proverbs, relational patterns, and other context-specific cultural realities are rooted in the evaluation (Easton 2012; Gaotlhobogwe et al. 2018). Chilisa and Mertens (2021) argued that MAE should be constructed on preexisting indigenous relational networks and other institutional mechanisms.

Evaluation philosophies tend to overemphasise Euro-American views to the detriment of Afrocentric conceptions (Chilisa et al. 2016). Nonetheless, the former tends to incorrectly diagnose the evaluation

measurement and outcomes in Africa (Chilisa et al. 2016; Gaotlhobogwe et al. 2018; Jeng 2012). Consequently, it is inevitable that efforts would be made to incorporate Afrocentric ideas into the pursuit of evaluation in Africa (Easton 2012). For instance, dialogues and 'talking circles' have been argued as key African indigenous deliberation approaches for collective decision-making (Boadu 2022; Mbava 2019) and active participation of relational stakeholders in what is evaluated, when, by whom, how, and for whom (Mbava & Chapman 2020).

Easton (2012) reasoned that there are several evaluative impulses present in African proverbs, which could be developed into a culturally responsive evaluation (CRE) or indigenously responsive evaluation (IRE). Besides, evaluation is an everyday social activity within the indigenous context (Chilisa et al. 2016). Thus, emphasis should be on how the core values of community spirit, belonging, oneness, ubuntu, dialogue, collectiveness, and consensus building, among others, should be adopted in the evaluation development process (Tirivanhu 2022). Cultural notions of community spirit and relational patterns ought to drive evaluation practice in indigenous contexts (Chilisa et al. 2016; Tirivanhu 2022). Nonetheless, it will call for creative thinking and innovation from researchers and evaluators who are attuned to the evaluative instincts rooted in cultural values.

The intersection of culture, knowledge system, and value for evaluation has been pursued since the establishment of the African Evaluation Association (AfrEA) in 1999 (Chilisa & Malunga 2012; Cloete & Auriacombe 2019; Easton 2012; Gaotlhobogwe et al. 2018), but efforts to contextualise evaluation using indigenous cultures, knowledge, and values have not been realised because evaluation in Africa largely remains dependent on external theories and techniques. Chilisa et al. (2016) defined culture to be a lived reality (the nature of ontology), knowledge systems (epistemology), and values (axiology) (p. 314). There is genuine evidence that the assumptions underpinning ontology, epistemology and axiology can be used to guide evaluation research and practice in Africa (Chilisa et al. 2016).

Indigenous evaluation studies and practices are widely overlooked in Ghana, as they are in many other African countries. Thus, there is a need to use cultural ideas and relational networks to develop new evaluation knowledge in Ghana, where an alternative evaluation approach is urgently required. While there are substantial studies on monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in Ghana (Akanbang & Abdallah 2021; Gildemyn 2014; Tengan & Aigbavboa 2017), there are limited studies on indigenous evaluation. Such omission is unfortunate, and it indicates the need to investigate the causes that have hampered the integration of indigenous concepts into evaluation research and practice in Ghana. The following were the primary research questions that guided the study:

- What are the impasses of indigenous values in evaluation in Ghana?

- What notions have explained the indigenous evaluation dilemmas in Ghana?
- To what extent have the challenges associated with indigenous evaluation impacted the use of indigenous approaches in contemporary evaluation in Ghana?

Conceptual and empirical reviews

Africa has had a great stride in the past three decades regarding the integration of Afrocentric values into the research and practices of evaluation. However, the African voice is still limited in the evaluation literature, thus the quest for the incorporation of African values in evaluation (Mapitsa & Ngwato 2020; Mbava & Chapman 2020). What has been lacking for the take-off is the political will and power dynamics, the multiplicity of indigenous values, and culture guilt conditions (Mapitsa & Ngwato 2020; Mbava & Chapman 2020). Power disparities and economic drawbacks have served as some of the pitfalls from which Euro-American evaluation knowledge and values have thrived on to the detriment of indigenous values (Chilisa et al. 2016). Eurocentric and Afrocentric, Global North and Global South, developed and developing, First World and Third World are just a few of the binaries that colonial and neo-colonial stereotypes have created between Africa and the rest of the world. These narratives, either explicitly or implicitly, tend to undermine notions of development and evaluation in Africa. Furthermore, Africa is the subject of intense scrutiny through the prism of Euro-America, which has hindered efforts to challenge the existing status quo in terms of evaluation and development strategies, and practices. The discussion of the integration of IRE and CRE concepts into evaluation is covered in the parts that follow.

Indigenously or culturally responsive evaluation

Evaluation values underpinning IRE and CRE are often used interchangeably in the literature (Brown & Lallo 2020; Chilisa et al. 2016; Cram 2018; Cram, Chilisa & Mertens 2013). The notion of indigeneity is a feature of lived realities, shared relations and engagement within and among relational structures in a specific cultural setting (Cram 2018; Cram et al. 2013). Indigenously responsive evaluation or culturally responsive evaluation is rooted in evaluation activities that are driven by indigenous values and other cultural value systems (Chilisa et al. 2016), which differs from mainstream evaluation theories, approaches and practices. The basis of both concepts is that evaluation activities within the indigenous setting cannot be 'indigenously or culturally neutral' (Chilisa et al. 2016; Hopson 2012). Thus, the sovereignty of indigenous societies should be of great interest to both the indigenous and non-indigenous evaluators (Brown & Lallo 2020) when embarking on any evaluation activities.

Evaluation, which is a social activity (Hopson 2012), cannot disregard the influence and impetus of culture because culture is built into the fabric of human relationships and activities. As a result, there is an increasing interest in

incorporating CRE concepts into evaluation (Easton 2012). The CRE is a theoretical, intellectual, and fundamentally political viewpoint that emphasises the significance of culture in evaluation research and activities (Hopson 2012:431). Cultural features are given considerable consideration in evaluation and are influenced by local socio-cultural, political, and external variables (Easton 2012; Hopson 2012). Mbava and Chapman (2020:2–3) argued that 'the relevance of values and culture in African contexts should be seen in contemporary knowledge systems and included into African model of evaluation'.

Several studies in recent times have attributed various terms to the notion of cultural evaluation such as culturally responsive indigenous evaluation (CRIE) (Bowman, Francis & Tyndall 2015; Goyena & Fallis 2019), relational evaluation (RE) (Chilisa et al. 2016; Visse, Abma & Widdershoven 2012), 'tribally-driven' or 'tribally-based' evaluation (TDE) (Letendre & Caine 2004). Reinhardt and Maday (2006) termed it as a 'tri-lateral evaluation model-where the influence of the indigenous people is the focal point of discussion', and CRE (Brown & Lallo 2020; Cloete & Auriacombe 2019; Thomas & Parsons 2017). This is to ensure that there is an alternative way to evaluate the delivery of public services, donor-funded initiatives, and community-based development policies.

The relevance of indigenous or cultural evaluative epitomes has been discovered in numerous African cultural customs and practices (Chilisa et al. 2016; Easton 2012). The notion of evaluation is also based on multiple relationship mechanisms. Despite a number of researches that have addressed indigenous mechanisms in socioeconomic studies (Breidlid 2009; Khumalo & Baloyi 2017), the concept of 'indigeneity' has received little attention as a feature of evaluation. Brown and Lallo (2020) argued that indigenous relational patterns and other cultural values are firmly embedded in cultural evaluative values. When doing evaluation research, indigenous and non-indigenous evaluators must evaluate the political and legal statute that is fundamental in indigenous societies (Bowman & Dodge-Francis 2018).

Indigenously driven evaluation approaches tend to place much emphasis on the integration of indigenous values and the active participation of indigenous people in the pursuits of evaluation (Mariella et al. 2009). Indigenously driven evaluation approaches tend to complement community-based participatory monitoring such as participatory rural appraisal (PRA), and participatory action research (PAR) (Smith et al. 2010) approaches and practices. Extensive studies have highlighted the relevance of indigenous evaluative views in community-based development (Bowman 2019; Bowman & Dodge-Francis 2018; Mariella et al. 2009). Thus, many indigenous evaluators in Africa and other parts of the world have advocated for the decolonisation of evaluation ideas by putting indigenous and other cultural values at the centre of evaluation research and practice (Chilisa & Malunga 2012; Cloete 2016). The goal is to incorporate indigenous values into the practices and theories rather than ignoring the core values of evaluation.

The 'CRE frequently focuses on who participates, how they participate, how frequently they participate, and whose information feeds the evaluation and is thought to be most useful' (Stickl Haugen & Chouinard 2019). However, the role of culture has been limited in the evaluation research and practices in Africa (Chilisa & Malunga 2012). Thomas and Parsons (2017) reasoned that despite the established CRE ideas, the practices and approaches are still emerging in public policies and donor-funded development programmes. Nonetheless, CRE is gaining traction in the fields of process and programme evaluation (Hood, Hopson & Kirkhart 2015).

The CRE tends to give a unique viewpoint on evaluation activities because of the inclusion of social values, norms, relational stakeholders, and other cultural factors into the theories, techniques, and practices of evaluation (McBride 2011; Thomas & Parsons 2017). There is a growing trend among African indigenous evaluators to include culturally appropriate values in the continent's evaluation frameworks (Chirau & Ramasobana 2022; Mapitsa & Ngwato 2020; Pophiwa & Saidi 2022). Recent efforts in Africa to decolonise evaluation methodologies have focused on incorporating context-specific cultural values into evaluation research and practice (Chilisa et al. 2016).

Culturally responsive evaluation philosophies require an epistemological change from contemporary evaluation models and practices that tend to delimit the evaluator's ability to better unpack and unravel the complexities associated with evaluation activities (Thomas & Parsons 2017). The CRE approaches are guided by distinct cultural values, concepts, and methods; however, the main underlying principle is to integrate cultural ideas, patterns, notions, and relational frames into the approaches and practice of evaluation (Frierson, Hood & Hughes 2002; Thomas & Parsons 2017).

Traditional ideas and other cultural values in some instances have the necessary tenets in describing and professing remedies for context-specific social occurrences (Mkabela 2005). Cultural evaluative values, ideas, and practices in Africa lie at the heart of Afrocentrism (Mkabela 2005), which is rooted in African values, norms, proverbs, relational patterns, and other cultural realities. Therefore, it is worthwhile to investigate the wide range of evaluative assumptions, concepts, techniques, and values that exist within the indigenous setting.

Culturally evaluative ideas have the potential to shape evaluation theory and practice in Africa, judging from recent CRE studies (Chirau & Ramasobana 2022; Mapitsa & Ngwato 2020; Pophiwa & Saidi 2022). Contemporary evaluation notions seem to push CRE values, knowledge, ideals, and other cultural realities on a modernisation guilt path where cultural evaluative values and philosophies tend to be deemed anachronistic in evaluation research and practice. However, several studies have argued that Afrocentric evaluation ideas are not anachronistic; rather, they have the

capacity to supplement mainstream evaluation theory and practice.

Empirical review

Evaluation is becoming a ubiquitous phenomenon; thus, the need for contextual values and cultural realities have become paramount in the evaluation research and practice. Thus, the integration of Afrocentric values into the theory and practice of evaluation has become imperative (Mbava & Chapman 2020). With a few notable exceptions, evaluation activities tend to focus on donor-driven initiatives in Ghana and Africa at large (Chilisa et al. 2012; Moore & Zenda 2012). Thus, the evaluation guidelines, methods and practices are often set by these philanthropic organisations who have little to no knowledge about the African cultural context (Chilisa et al. 2012; Gaotlhobogwe et al. 2018).

Nonetheless, the recent quest among African evaluators is to ensure that the evaluation research and practices are rooted in 'cultural competence, contextual relevance and cultural validity' (Pophiwa & Saidi 2022). The notion is that this will guarantee sustainability because Euro-American evaluation approaches have failed to properly measure the programme outcome and reverse developmental challenges in the continent (Chilisa & Mertens 2021). However, the authors hastened to add that the current evaluation approaches and practices tend to exclude indigenous knowledge and the people who are mostly the recipients of several philanthropic interventions (Chilisa 2015; Chilisa & Mertens 2021).

Chilisa et al. (2016) observed that Euro-Western evaluation and research theories and methods tend to sideline and disregard the relevance of knowledge systems from former colonies that were historically oppressed. The narrative is that former colonies in Africa have anachronistic values, which tend to cause evaluators to self-question the relevance of cultural values in evaluation (Mbava & Chapman 2020; Pophiwa & Saidi 2022). Power dynamics also exist in the creation evaluation agendas, who decides when to begin, the approach, and the theory to be used. These issues include whose knowledge matters and whether it is Afrocentric or Eurocentric. (Chilisa et al. 2016).

Evaluation courses in higher education and other educational institutions across Africa are predominantly centred on Euro-American theories and practices. However, in recent times, some African scholars, including Chilisa and Mertens (2021), Mbava and Chapman (2020), and Mapitsa and Ngwato (2020), have initiated a variety of research efforts and projects with the goal of enhancing indigenous and other African knowledge systems in evaluation research and practice. Integrating indigenous people and their knowledge and belief systems (culture) into evaluation activities may promote productive collaboration between indigenous people, sub-national and donor-driven agencies in the creation and implementation of guidelines for community-based and other development evaluation activities (Mariella et al. 2009).

Bowman and Dodge-Francis (2018) argued that the social, political, and cultural setting within the indigenous communities informs the evaluation framework, which has the tendency to alter the strategy and level of engagement in the evaluation activities. The premise underlying cultural or indigenous evaluation is that in order to conceive, plan, and implement evaluation activities, different stakeholders within the indigenous settings must work together to incorporate the values. Nonetheless, within the indigenous settings, there is a hierarchical power dynamic that tends to hinder effective collaboration among the various relational stakeholders. Mapitsa and Ngwato (2020) asserted that indigenous relational networks are essential in the design of sustainable evaluation research and practice. Because of the differences between IRE and CRE and mainstream evaluation, combining approaches can promote learning, shared knowledge, ownership, and comprehension of the evaluation's objective.

Several indigenous concepts, notions, frameworks, and philosophies have been proposed by these scholars to decolonise and indigenise the evaluation theories and approaches (Chilisa et al. 2016; Easton 2012; Mbava & Chapman 2020; Pophiwa & Saidi 2022). The inclusion of the culture of beneficiary communities in the evaluation process has been central in their respective studies. The recent quest among these scholars is to encourage the incorporation of Afrocentric values in the approaches, methods, and practices of evaluation in the continent. However, there are some dilemmas that might have hindered the integration of culture in evaluation in Ghana and Africa at large.

Research methods and design

Thematic analysis was used in this article (Vaismoradi, Turunen & Bondas 2013). The findings offered in this article were part of a research study conducted in the year 2021–2022 regarding the factors affecting the integration of cultural values into evaluation concepts and practices in two traditional areas in the Eastern Region of Ghana (see Table 1). During the field interviews, several research themes were discussed, including indigenous relational networks, indigenous stakeholders, indigenous evaluation activities, indigenous people's participation in community-based development, indigenous information gathering, feedback mechanisms and the challenges of integrating cultural values into evaluation activities within the indigenous settings.

Case study areas

Based on both internal and construct validity rather than external validity (i.e. generalisability), multiple case study approaches were adopted as the method of inquiry (Mariotto, Zanni & Moraes 2014; Stewart 2012). Furthermore, using the 'four-dimension criteria' (credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability) put forward by Lincoln and Guba (1986), the researcher planned for and conducted a series of key informant and semi-structured interviews. Interviews were conducted with four traditional leaders (sub-divisional leaders, heads of clans), nine community

development leaders, six opinion leaders, and three local government officials. To obtain a meaningful account of the drawbacks of indigenous RE approaches, multiple case studies were used because of the ability of the approach to provide the researcher with a comprehensive understanding of the two indigenous communities and their social settings. Examining the communal assessment factors in the indigenous communities under study was key to ascertaining some of the challenges and providing pragmatic remedies. The study used two traditional areas, Akuapim Traditional Council (ATC), and Akye-Abuakwa Traditional Areas (AATA) situated in two local government areas (Akuapim North and Suhum) in Eastern Region of Ghana as case studies and a total of 22 participants were interviewed in both areas (see Table 1).

Sampling approach

There was only one sampling strategy used. Within the two local government districts, the two traditional areas were chosen using a convenient sampling technique (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim 2016). The key informant interviews (KIIs) and semi-structured interviews with traditional opinion leaders, local government officials, and community development leaders both used the same sampling technique.

Data collection tools

The research used several data collection instruments to solicit for the necessary information. The instruments employed in this article have been outlined in the following sub-sections.

Key informant interviews

Using in-depth KIIs (Kumar 1989), traditional opinion leaders were interviewed. Key informant interviews were utilised to obtain relevant information from knowledgeable indigenous opinion leaders who have in-depth knowledge and perspectives on indigenous relational assessment processes. A total of nine interviews were conducted from both traditional areas. The interviews were audio recorded, and each lasted between 45 and 60 min, which were later transcribed for further analysis. Also, nine community development leaders took part in KIIs.

Semi-structured interviews

To augment the KIIs, semi-structured interviews with two-way communication (Creswell 2017) were utilised to give participants the opportunity to voice their views on community-based evaluation procedures and the challenges. Besides, community dialogues are key principles in traditional societies. Thus, semi-structured interviews were conducted with three (3) local government representatives who are key role players in community-based development activities.

Participants' observations

To maintain some level of data correctness, coherence, and robust interpretations, a participant observation approach

(Sedano et al. 2017) was used to gather certain aspects of the data through careful notetaking and recording of the sequence of relationship assessment processes. Using the following themes; cultural guilt challenges, power dependency dilemma, globalisation and localisation hindrances, post-colonial legacies, revenue and urbanisation, an ethnographic observation was conducted by the researcher, where he lived in the communities for over 6 months. The technique gave the researcher the chance to participate in and interact with the indigenous community leaders in a variety of social contexts while also observing social gatherings, individual, and communal activities in various settings.

Documentary evidence

By utilising a documentary approach to research (Ahmed 2010) and triangulating the available grey literature on traditional and modern decentralised government institutions and development activities in Ghana, the article supplemented the field data. Using a content analysis approach, several documentary literature such as the *Chieftaincy Act, 2008* (Act No. 759), which focuses on the interest of indigenous and tribal peoples in Ghana, the *Local Governance Act, 2016* (Act No. 936), ministerial reports, policy briefs, and research articles were analysed.

Summary of the methods

A theme analysis technique was used in this article. Using various case studies, data were collected through interviews from several respondents within the case study areas employing a convenient sampling technique. The main data collecting instruments were key informant and semi-structured interviews. Several interviews were conducted with traditional leaders, community opinion leaders, local government officials and community development members, totalling 22 participants. In addition to the basic data gathering technologies, participant observation and documentation evidence were analysed through the technique of data triangulation.

Data analysis approach

A variety of qualitative data analysis techniques were used. The initial analysis was critical and focused on constructing a narrative account of indigenous perspectives on RE, impasses related to theories, techniques, and practices, and the ideas that underlie indigenous evaluation conundrums. Additional narratives about the challenges of incorporating indigenous or cultural evaluation norms and practices into contemporary evaluation were generated. The analysis approach espoused open coding techniques to compare the data from the two traditional and local government areas at the same time to generate additional useful categories (see Kenny & Fourie 2015). The study was interested in the connections between the various categories, hence the axial coding helped to identify the changing connections between the categories (Charmaz 2017) by rearranging and reclassifying the codes according to their relationships.

The field interviews were audio recorded and transcribed for analysis. The transcripts were then studied and repeatedly read to find pertinent patterns that could be matched to the various themes and give answers to the research questions. Field data were analysed using a variety of qualitative data analysis techniques. Data triangulation technique (Bengtsson 2016) was utilised to enhance the possibility of controlling, or at the very least assessing, some of the factors influencing the conclusions by validating the multiple data points through cross-verification to ensure consistency of findings. The data obtained from the field interviews (transcripts) were triangulated with the documentary literature by reading them several times and finding patterns and relationships within and among the various textual data. Documentary data that had a direct impact on the study were the ones that were triangulated. The research project received ethical clearance from the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, South Africa (Ethics Reference Number: HS18/6/17).

Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance to conduct this study was obtained from the University of the Western Cape Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (No. HS18/6/17).

Findings

This section builds on the discussion of cultural values in evaluation and delineated several dilemmas associated with cultural competence in evaluation, including the ethical and notional challenges. Besides, contemporary fields of evaluation still have a long way to go before they can fully integrate cultural factors. Although evaluation notions rooted in cultural values have begun to be examined, it appears that they have yet to be widely utilised and considered effective in evaluation research and practice. This section discusses the following pitfalls: cultural guilt challenges, power dependency dilemma, globalisation and localisation hindrances, post-colonial legacies, revenue and urbanisation issues that have made it difficult to incorporate cultural concepts into contemporary evaluation methods and practices in Ghana.

The cultural guilt dilemma

In Ghana and Africa at large, cultural ideas and values are under enormous scrutiny despite the embedded evaluative notions in communal arrangements and other cultural realities. Nonetheless, there is an apparent disregard for the evaluative impulses rooted in indigenous values and other relational networks. A respondent from the ATC traditional areas lamented in the following interview extract:

'Most people enjoy cultural celebrations and festivals, but sub-national and national development experts tend to neglect cultural ethics when it comes to community-based development and evaluation activities. The local people have very little say in the evaluation and development decision-making process.'[1]

1.Interview with a traditional leader from ATC.

The given remark indicates that development and evaluation researchers and experts tend to disregard indigenous values because they frequently get caught up in modernisation complexities and Western value superiority. A community development leader further lamented that:

'… [C]ultural values and other significant local ideas expressed through the indigenous relational patterns about community development and evaluation activities are often not the preference of donor funders, sub-national and national development expertise.'[2]

Most community-based development programmes are frequently directed and supervised by field evaluators and development specialists who venerate Euro-Western evaluation notions to the detriment of indigenous values.

Power disparities and dependence dilemma

Power dynamics influence local and stakeholder participation as well as whose knowledge needs to be considered in designing the evaluation activities. The integration of cultural values in evaluation research and practice has often been linked to knowledge politics and power relations. These shape the evaluation knowledge within and among the indigenous relational structures and the sub-national institutions. This was explained by a traditional opinion leader in the following interview excerpt:

'… [T]he indigenous relational structures used to serve as the … governing and [social] accountability institutions. It is still influential today, but it has little power to influence the incorporation of cultural values into community-based development decision-making and evaluation activities. Local government development institutions [that prefer contemporary development and evaluation arrangements] wield disproportionate power [compared to the indigenous relational arrangements].'[3]

While most indigenous relational networks (see Figure 1) and other social frameworks were previously used, many have been deemed outdated by the introduction of the local government decentralised systems. As a result, state-led local government bodies are being created to integrate development and evaluation concepts into community-based development and evaluation research and practice. When it comes to community participation, evaluation activities, and social accountability, power dynamics are also present within indigenous relational systems as indicated in Figure 1. In the following interview excerpt, a community development leader observes:

'We tend to overemphasise modern values to the detriment of indigenous value systems when it comes to development, evaluation, participation and accountability but we all know they have failed us … and local government agencies are built on these modern development ideals, and we are directly or indirectly made to adhere to rather than our cultural values [relational arrangements].'[4]

2.Interview with a community development leader from ATC.

3.Interview with a traditional opinion leader from AATA.

4.Interview with a community development leader from ATC.
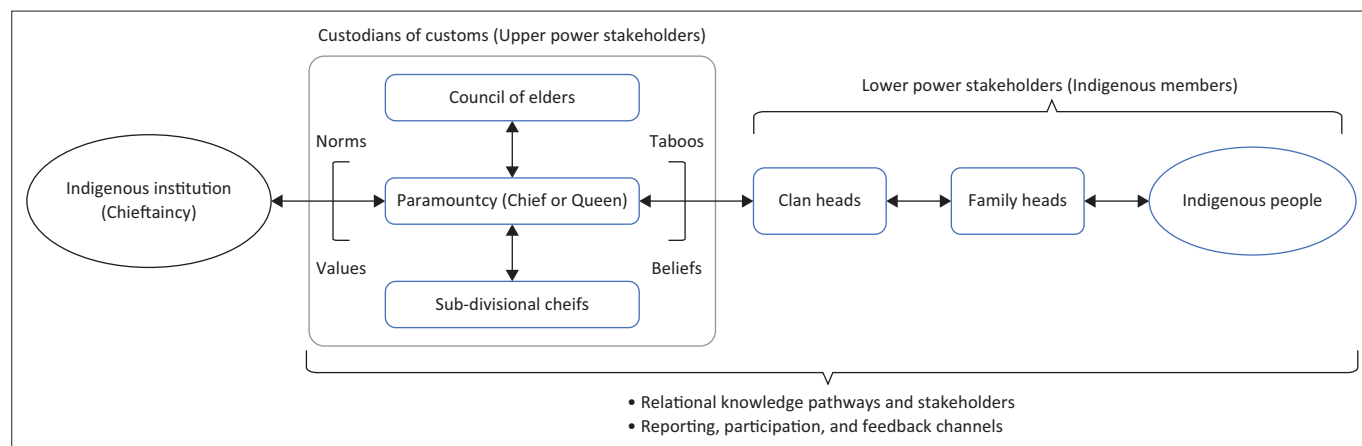
FIGURE 1: Indigenous relational knowledge, reporting and feedback pathways.

TABLE 1: A table showing case study region, districts, traditional areas and categories of participants.

Region	Districts and traditional areas	Categories	Respondents ID	Number of respondents
Eastern Region	Akuapim North (AN), Akuapim Traditional Council (ATC) (ATCNA)	Traditional leaders (sub-divisional leaders, heads of clans)	TATC	2
		Community development leaders	CATC	5
		Local government officials	LOAS	1
		Community Opinion leaders	COPL	3
	Suhum Municipality (SU) (Akyem-Abuakwa Traditional Area) AATA (ATCSU)	Traditional leaders (sub-divisional leaders, clan heads)	TAATA	2
		Community development leaders	CAATA	4
		Local government officials	LOSU	2
		Community opinion leaders	COPL	3
Total				**22**

CAATA, Community Leader Akyem-Abuakwa Traditional Area; CATC, Community Leader Akuapim Traditional Council; COPL, Community Opinion Leader; LOAN, Local Official Akuapim North; LOSU, Local Official Suhum Municipality; TAATA, Traditional Leader Akyem-Abuakwa Traditional Area; TATC, Traditional Leader Akuapim Traditional Council.

The evaluation practices and models used in assessing community-based activities are trapped in Euro-American evaluation values, which have been pushed by the sub-national development institutions but are not in tune with culturally sensitive development and evaluation practices.

The participation of relational stakeholders within indigenous contexts is influenced by power dynamics between and among upper (indigenous custodians) and lower power stakeholders (indigenous members) in the six indigenous layers, which comprise Chiefs or Queen, sub-divisional heads, council of elders, clan heads, family heads and the indigenous people as indicated in Figure 1.

Contemporary and indigenisation dilemma

The increasing acceptance of incorporating indigenous ideas into the form, nature, and practice of evaluation is evidence that each can contribute something to the other even though contemporary and culturally relevant development and evaluation practices seem to be at odds with one another. A traditional leader expressed that:

> '… [Y]ou cannot do away with the indigenous people and their culture, knowledge systems, norms, and values. Local policies are frequently developed by assemblies and implemented in indigenous settings; however, the policies are successful when they take cultural philosophies and belief systems into consideration.'[5]

5.Interview with a traditional leader from AATA.

Although the indigenous people continue to hold customary beliefs in high regard, the cultures considered for the study are not wholly free from the effect of modern development and evaluative notions. A traditional leader decried the lack of recognition of indigenous people's norms, practices, and knowledge:

> 'Indigenous societies are not against evaluation and development notions; we just want our indigenous ideals and value systems recognised. A lot has changed over the years, but I do not believe we are leaving behind our cultural values and traditions because we are identified by these socio-cultural beliefs and values systems.'[6]

Indigenous people still cherish their socio-cultural ideals of communal accountability, dialogues, collaboration, and consensus building, inter alia, but they will openly accept modern development and evaluation concepts provided the latter recognise the importance of the former. Even though indigenous and contemporary evaluation theories are significantly distinct, they may be utilised together to evaluate community-based initiatives to ensure that they are sustained.

Post-colonial legacy dilemma

The majority of community development and evaluation activities are often trapped in local colonial legacies; thus,

6.Interview with a traditional leader from AATA.

evaluation impulses embedded in indigenous values tend to receive relatively little to no reverence within already biased development and evaluation approaches, concepts and practices. A traditional development leader in the interview extract stated that:

> 'Community-based development activities are often trapped in sub-national initiatives and often the evaluation guidelines are often initiated by the field officers. Existing cultural values and social networks when used are often altered by the field officers but are not given the needed recognition.'[7]

The preceding quote appears to indicate cultural appropriation and is unfair to indigenous people. It also implies that the current decolonisation discourse among several indigenous researchers, which focuses on culturally considerate evaluation attempts, will be futile if non-indigenous scholars and the local elite continue to dismiss the relevance of indigenous relations and practices. The preference for contemporary development and evaluation ideas and the neglect of indigenous knowledge systems by the educated elite both at the sub-national and national levels could serve as a drawback to the present decolonisation discourse.

It was found that the two societies partly use community development and evaluation mechanisms rooted in Euro-American. The indigenous relational institutions and other social principles such as ubuntu, dialogue, community spirit, consensus building, collaboration, self-organisation, inter alia, previously used are undermined by Western constructs and notions. A traditional leader in the following interview stated that:

> '… [I]ndigenous relational structures and values never fully gained their status in the current socio-political settings. Indigenous values continue to be scrutinised by sub-national entities and this creates conflict instead of collaboration between the indigenous and local assemblies regarding whose knowledge and power should be dominant.'[8]

The quote indicates that colonialism changed the roles of the indigenous relational institutions and their knowledge systems. Besides, the current social, political, and economic systems have further diminished the use of indigenous knowledge systems and institutions.

Indigenous mobilisation dilemma

Self-organisation, dialogue, collaboration, talking circle, social networks and community gathering are core indigenous principles for decision-making and evaluation; however, they have become difficult to attain because of rapid urbanisation in the two indigenous communities. It has become difficult for indigenous people to quickly organise and mobilise for community endeavours. This has also hampered 'communal labour' (community voluntary

activities) as an indigenous development, evaluation and fund-raising practices. As stated by a traditional leader from the AATA in the following interview excerpt:

> 'Social networking used for 'communal labour' [*community activities*] within indigenous societies is becoming more and more difficult due to the rapid urbanisation of these areas.'[9]

The traditional leader further emphasised that:

> 'Instead of indigenous town criers, traditional areas now use public address systems, however, it is also becoming harder to willingly get people to participate in these community development voluntary activities and keep track of them.'[10]

Moreover, an ATC traditional leader emphasised urbanisation and related issues that are steadily eroding the cultural value of 'communal labour' within indigenous communities:

> 'Before, indigenous leaders could mobilise their communities for a good cause with more authority, control, and influence. Town criers could quickly transmit an announcement to every sub-division when the traditional areas were small.'[11]

The traditional leader further sheds light on the decentralisation systems within the indigenous areas:

> '… [D]ecentralised political structures are to blame for many changes within the indigenous societies. While local assemblies are mostly responsible for organising their constituents, indigenous leaders have limited power to do so.'[12]

The decentralised assemblies have great potential for development but has some consequence on the indigenous mobilisation systems as captured in the given interview extract. Indigenous development and evaluation concepts have the potential to achieve the needed outcomes if the design, implementation and evaluation process are decolonised which requires material and financial resources. A traditional leader from AATC stated that:

> '… [I]ndigenous people used to mobilise their financial resources but that is no more, the local government institutions have taken that responsibility. A lot has changed because of urbanisation and decentralised government institutions.'[13]

While urbanisation offers the potential for progress, it also poses a threat to the indigenous patterns of wealth mobilisation and self-organisation, as represented in the preceding quote.

Discussion

Evaluation ideas within the two case study areas are rooted in cultural ideas and social relations patterns (see Figure 1); however, these ideals are often directly or indirectly neglected by non-indigenous evaluators. While the actual outcome of the evaluation decolonisation process is not realised yet, the

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7. Interview with a traditional development leader from AATA.

8. Interview with a traditional leader from ATC.

9. Interview with a traditional leader from AATA.

10. Interview with a traditional leader from AATA.

11. Interview with a traditional leader from ATC.

12. Interview with a traditional leader from ATC.

13. Interview with a traditional leader from AATC.

ongoing quest to decolonise the evaluation paradigms to contextualise a culturally responsive approach to research and evaluation is a step in the right direction. This article identified several factors that have influenced the integration of cultural evaluation values and philosophies into the evaluation research and practice.

The indigenous people, not the sub-national development entities, tend to understand and employ cultural evaluative values the most. The latter encourages the established wealth and power-based Western values that are often emphasised by development donors and evaluators over Afrocentric evaluation values as also observed by Chilisa et al. (2016) and Gaotlhobogwe et al. (2018) in their respective studies in Africa. Thus, decolonising the methodologies is necessary because they are culturally biased and have not been successful in measuring or predicting evaluation outcomes in Africa (Chilisa et al. 2016). Nonetheless, power and wealth disparities exist within indigenous relational mechanisms, which often influence when the evaluation is initiated, who participates, by whom, for whom and how (see Figure 1) and they are often culturally skewed.

Despite efforts by indigenous evaluators to integrate Afrocentric values into conventional evaluation strategies, there is a perceived disregard for indigenous evaluative values. The latter tends to perceive the former approaches as anachronistic and inclined to undermine the integration of cultural values into the evaluation research and practice. Likewise, the evaluation practices and frameworks used to measure community-based development activities within the two indigenous societies are influenced by mainstream evaluation notions although they are out of sync with cultural evaluation values. Similar studies conducted in other parts of Africa found that evaluation research and practice are focused on Euro-American ideals of measurement, but there is a need to decolonise these standards so that evaluation methods and practices are African-centred (Chirau & Ramasobana 2022; Mapitsa & Ngwato 2020; Pophiwa & Saidi 2022).

The value of indigenous and conventional data collection techniques, distribution avenues, and feedback mechanisms within traditional communities is apparent. For information gathering and providing feedback in the two case study areas, both the traditional 'gon-gon beater' and contemporary public address systems proved to be effective (see Figure 1). To ensure effective and sustainable evaluation, there must be a synergy between mainstream and indigenous evaluation values including data gathering innovation tools. Moreover, Chilisa et al. (2016) argued that evaluation within the indigenous context has the potential to achieve the needed outcomes when the strategies and procedures are rooted in context-specific cultural values.

It was found that the indigenous relational knowledge systems and values as indicated in Figure 1 are being undercut by the weakening social networks and rapid urbanisation within the two case study areas. This has limited the influence of socio-cultural values and ethnic bonds within and among the upper and lower power stakeholders (see Figure 1). The indigenous social networks that support most indigenous activities such as decision-making, dialogue, collaboration, self-organisation, and consensus building, among others, are being eroded as a result of the two communities' fast suburbanisation and urbanisation.

Evaluation activities within the case study communities were found to be rooted in indigenous value of knowing and power. Within the six relational structures as indicated in Figure 1, there is some level of power dynamics between 'upper power stakeholders' and 'lower power stakeholders' when it comes to community development decision-making and evaluation activities. The relational knowledge pathways serve as the basis for the community decision-making and evaluation activities. A similar power and knowledge dynamics was found between the indigenous institutions and sub-national development agencies within the local government areas. The sub-national institutions tend to overlook the indigenous values although they are chiefly different from contemporary notions of development and evaluation.

Assets mobilisation has great potential for community development and evaluation activities within the indigenous societies, yet, it has been weakened by the introduction of local government revenue generation units, which tend to favour the sub-national entities to the detriment of the indigenous societies. Likewise, community mobilisation and self-organisation within the indigenous context are hampered by rapid urbanisation, which tends to limit the influence and control of the indigenous relational and social accountability mechanisms. Both factors tend to limit the efforts of indigenous people to incorporate socio-cultural and other relational patterns into contemporary development and evaluation activities (see Figure 1). Contemporary governance and development establishments within indigenous societies were perceived to have undermined cultural values in community development decision-making, implementation, and evaluation. Even though indigenous people adore cultural values, contemporary concepts, and governance systems sometimes undermine their usefulness in evaluation practices.

Western constructs and theories exert a certain influence on the decentralised creation and evaluation systems present in the case study areas. Likewise, the evaluation arrangements espoused by sub-national establishments within the indigenous settings are no exception, thus, the call from indigenous evaluators and researchers to decolonise and incorporate indigenous values as also recommended by Chilisa et al.'s (2016) study in Africa. It was found that sub-national development institutions prefer contemporary evaluation and development approaches and concepts within indigenous communities, at the expense of indigenous and cultural values that the latter saw as antiquated. The indigenous people, however, treasured their social networks

and other cultural values that have influence on societies, such as 'communal labour' activities and social accountability.

The indigenous communities used as case studies tend to rely on cultural values and indigenous relational patterns when it comes to community-based development decision-making, social accountability, and evaluation activities (see Figure 1). However, the social relations or network systems and other cultural values are undercut by the established sub-national institutions such as the regional coordinating councils and district assemblies that are more driven by Western principles. The finding is consistent with Chilisa and Mertens (2021) study where they observed that development decision-making and evaluation philosophies are not without geo-political and Western notions. There was a quest among the indigenous people for the integration of their socio-cultural values and practice into the contemporary development decision-making and evaluation activities. This is in accord with Mapitsa and Ngwato (2020) and Chilisa and Mertens (2021) studies where evaluation activities are enhanced and sustained when socio-cultural values are rooted in the evaluation practice.

Conclusion

The existence of indigenous evaluation ideas and relational patterns within the case study areas is not in doubt; however, the findings showed that the integration of such evaluation theories, methods, and practices into evaluation frameworks has been undermined by several issues, including modernisation issues, power disparities, globalisation and localisation, post-colonial legacies, financial resources and urbanisation dilemmas. Besides, Afrocentric evaluation ideas and conceptions are frequently neglected in favour of Euro-American evaluation tenets. Non-indigenous evaluators and researchers tend to emphasise contemporary evaluation frameworks, which often have their roots in wealth and power, at the expense of indigenous evaluation principles. The notion is that the former has not proven to be a reliable measurement of evaluation. Post-colonial legacies within the case study areas frequently undermine the discourse surrounding the decolonisation of mainstream evaluation philosophies among indigenous evaluators and researchers. Non-indigenous evaluators, researchers, and the educated elite at the local government level tend to favour mainstream evaluation and development approaches over indigenous philosophies, which is a downside to the current decolonial discourse. Furthermore, indigenous relational structures are frequently overlooked, either directly or indirectly, by past social, cultural, political, and economic legacies, notwithstanding the evaluation impulses contained in indigenous relational patterns and other cultural realities inside indigenous settings. Despite the delineated constraints, the development of indigenous evaluation frameworks and activities in Ghana and other parts of Africa is greatly benefiting from the enormous indigenous relational philosophies and structures. These include community spirit, mutual trust, consensus building, co-ownership, self-organisation, and social accountability. These values are rooted in culturally sensitive evaluation, community-based M&E, tribally driven participatory evaluation, RE, and

empowerment evaluations. To engender effective and efficient evaluation measurements and outcomes, a synergy between Euro-American and indigenous evaluation approaches, notions, and practices will generally widen the evaluation procedures and activities.

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