

Editorial

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Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in Africa is growing and faces huge challenges related to how local needs, contextual nuances and historical debates will embrace, stand up to, harness and/or influence international practices in the process of creating its own identity. The development of centralised M&E systems and frameworks within governments, to foster more substantive evidence-based policymaking processes, faces the possible danger of focusing on technical details, outside of reflections and actions on the politics and public-value foundations of such systems. The limited professional M&E capital across Africa has also encouraged concerted efforts to develop M&E capacity in Africa and previous editions of this journal have shared the debates related to the professionalisation of M&E in Africa. Still, some questions remain. Should 'made in Africa' evaluation support and/or promote value pluralism? That is, should we seek to represent the full range of interests in the course of designing an evaluation? This is the stance of the democratic evaluator who makes the methods and techniques of evaluation accessible to non-specialists, that is, the general population. Or should we adhere to the dictates of donors of evaluation and provide only highly technical reports? Mahmood Mamdani (2011) warns of Africa's post-colonial scourge where the market-driven model is dominant in African universities. Evaluators (he had consultants) presume that research is all about finding answers to problems defined by a client. Evaluators think of evaluation research as finding answers, not as formulating a problem. He claims that the dominant Western paradigm de-historicises and de-contextualises other experiences, whether Western or non-Western. He further suggests that our ambition should be to challenge the foundations of the prevailing intellectual paradigm. The *African Evaluation Journal* strives to be a platform for this ongoing debate and believes that the scholarly article is one vehicle for claiming original knowledge about the world and Africa in particular.

The persistent M&E 'made in Africa' theme allows for careful thought about technical and methodological constructs as well as introspection about their utility and usefulness in the African context. The contributors to this edition not only share their methodological approaches in great detail but also provide deep analyses of contexts, the challenges and institutional constraints that add to the complexity of practising evaluators in Africa. Firstly, Machaka considers the need to measure the effectiveness of environmental impact assessment (EIA) systems with the purpose of developing an alternative conceptual and practical model to evaluate the effectiveness of EIA systems. A method, rights and resources model is introduced. This model, according to the author, focuses on substantive and procedural effectiveness and objectivity of the EIA system. The objective evaluation of the effectiveness of the EIA system is built into the EIA system rather than applied externally on the EIA system. Chivasa provides the rich contextual challenges that confront peace-building initiatives in Zimbabwe. He assessed the efficacy of informal peace committees and concludes that their strengths lie in the fact that they are self-initiated and they represent the interest of the community. The participatory process of this study is deftly outlined and surfaces the cultural and social expectations of communities as they grapple with issues of survival on a daily basis.

The French contribution to this edition comes from Cameroon. Foueka discusses the contribution of school quality in education in sub-Saharan Africa, focusing on Francophone countries. They used the Shapley–Owen–Shorrocks (SOS) approach to appreciate the impact of universal primary education, adult literacy and gender parity on the 'quality of education' component that seems to act increasingly favourably in economic development in developing countries. The results showed that different components of the EDI (Education Development Index) had various and varied contributions and suggested that the quality of education marginally contributed to human development in various African countries.

Kibuule, Lates, Kagoya, Bayobuya, Niaz and Rennie, in another context in Africa, outline the challenges faced by the health system in Namibia where medicine use is difficult to monitor. They state that an efficient system for monitoring medicine use is a key element for successful healthcare delivery. The inconsistent monitoring of medicine use in Namibia is mainly because of lack of

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budgetary commitment to this activity. They proposed and piloted an inter-institutional collaborative model for monitoring medicine use in public health facilities in Namibia. They found this to be cost-effective, and it provided opportunities for capacity building of students and institutions monitoring medicine use in this context. This is followed by Kariuki and Reddy who consider best practices for operationalising an effective M&E system for local government. They provide the findings of a study in KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa where evaluation capacity was low in the majority

of the municipalities. The latter were inadequately resourced with limited human capacity for M&E. They recommended that municipalities be adequately resourced with competent M&E personnel. The transdisciplinary nature of M&E is evident from the varied areas of foci of these contributions.

References

Mamdani, M., 2011, 'Africa's post-colonial scourge', *Mail & Guardian*, 27 May, viewed 09 November 2017, from <https://mg.co.za/article/2011-05-27-africas-postcolonial-scurge>