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Nash **Tysmans**
Sara **Dewachter**
Nathalie **Holvoet**
Tewelde Gebremariam **Adhanom**
Wanda **Casten**
Eshetu W. **Demissie**
Marian Kaye C. **Gamboa**
Abdurahman Hamza **Ibrahim**
Hezron **Makundi**
Georgina Angela **Manyuru,**

Nicholas **Mugabi**
Yahya E. **Nawanda**
Chau Hoai **Nguyen**
William Amos **Pallangyo**
Rose **Pascual-Villar**
Luz Prado **Saavedra**
Mariluz Torres **Salgado**
Anh Ngoc **Vu**
Zerihun Berhane **Weldegebriel**
Eva **Wuyts**



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Institute of Development Policy

Postal address:	Visiting address:
Prinsstraat 13	Lange Sint-Annastraat 7
B-2000 Antwerpen	B-2000 Antwerpen
Belgium	Belgium

Tel: +32 (0)3 265 57 70
Fax: +32 (0)3 265 57 71
e-mail: iob@uantwerp.be
<http://www.uantwerp.be/iob>

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January 2023

Nash **Tysmans**^a
Sara **Dewachter**^b
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Luz Prado **Saavedra**^o
Mariluz Torres **Salgado**^p
Anh Ngoc **Vu**^q
Zerihun Berhane **Weldegebriel**^r
Eva **Wuyts**^s

^aIndependent consultant/researcher

^bInstitute of Development Policy, University of Antwerp

^cDepartment of Gender and Development Studies, College of Social Science and Humanities, University of Gondar

^dPilipinas Monitoring & Evaluation Society

^ePath Development Consulting and Research

^fNational Economic and Development Authority (NEDA); independent MEL consultant

^gSchool of Governance and Development Studies, Hawassa University

^hIDS, University of Dar es Salaam

ⁱWorld Bank Group, Uganda Country Office

^jSchool of Social Sciences, Makerere University

^kDepartment of Development Studies (DDS), College of Social Sciences and Humanities, Sokoine University of Agriculture

^lCanadian Development Program in Vietnam

^mLaw School of Tanzania

ⁿNational Economic and Development Authority (NEDA); Bulacan State University

^oIndependent consultant/researcher

^pUniversidad Centroamericana (UCA)

^qDepartment of Politics and International Relations, University of Sheffield

^rCentre for African Asian Studies, Addis Ababa University

^sIndependent consultant/researcher

One of the original co-authors has been removed from this paper at their request and with the agreement of the remaining authors. No changes have been made to the substance of the paper.

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Nash Tysmans, Sara Dewachter, Nathalie Holvoet (corresponding author), Tewelde Gebremariam Adhanom, Wanda Casten, Eshetu Woldeyohannes Demissie, Marian Kaye C. Gamboa, Abdurahman Hamza Ibrahim, Hezron Makundi, Georgina Angela Manyuru, Nicholas Mugabi, Yahya E. Nawanda, Chau Hoai Nguyen, William Amos Pallangyo, Rose Pascual-Villar, Luz Prado Saavedra, Mariluz Torres Salgado, Anh Ngoc Vu, Zerihun Berhane Weldegebriel, Eva Wuyts

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Abstract

Using a collaborative, multi-perspective team approach to evaluate the impact of a development studies' programme is beneficial for learning, accountability, and the evaluation process itself. The local-in-global approach enables to combine culturally responsive localized evaluation with global tools to make findings locally grounded yet comparable across different settings. Accountability is broadened beyond the host country's taxpayers and the scholarship agency to include stakeholders in the South, creating a multi-loci accountability pattern. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed gaps and inequities in global evaluation relations and this article, aligned with ongoing debates on decolonizing evaluation, provides food for thought for reconceptualizing local-global evaluation relations.

Keywords: collaborative evaluation, multi-country, local-in-global, culturally responsive evaluation, multi-perspectivity, alumni

1. Introduction

Through the Global Minds Initiative financed by VLIR-UOS, the Institute of Development Policy (IOB) at the University of Antwerp, had the opportunity to conduct the Alumni Impact Barometer study using a collaborative and culturally responsive approach to evaluation. The objective of the Alumni Impact Barometer study was to identify and unpack the impact of the institute's master programmes on its graduates, the organizations where they work and in terms of societal 'development.'

Every year, the institute receives scholarships from Belgian development cooperation and attracts students of many different nationalities to study development through its three master programs: Development Evaluation and Management, Governance and Development, and Globalization and Development. Over a period of 20 years, about 1,300 students from more than 100 different countries have studied at IOB and now comprise a lively alumni community and ecosystem of intercultural interaction. Through the evaluation process, the Alumni Impact Barometer study sought to satisfy accountability purposes and in particular generate learnings that would improve the quality and relevance of the education programmes, learn about the importance of alumni policy matters and understand how best to conceptualize its impact.

Given the complexity of the topic under evaluation (impact on development), which meant having to navigate different dimensions of meaning without a clear-cut definition, and potentially, having to interpret different meanings embedded in the different contexts, it was essential to have a multi-perspective lens reflected in the diversity of the team conducting the evaluation.

A multi-cultural, multi-national, gender- and sector-balanced and collaborative approach to evaluation is of particular relevance to higher education institutions, especially other universities offering Development Studies. This approach to evaluation is also valuable to the practice of development itself where Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) is an established field whose methods and inquiries can go as far as determining how and to whom resources are allocated to.

The next section of this article discusses the literature on collaborative and culturally responsive evaluation in which this multi-perspective team approach to evaluation is rooted. Section 3 presents the case study describing the team composition and the way the evaluation process was executed. The fourth section highlights the added value as well as potential pitfalls of this multi-perspective team approach to evaluation. Here we focus on contributions and challenges in terms of learning, accountability, and the evaluation process itself, including links to a broader debate on decolonizing evaluation. The final section summarizes the main findings, offers points for reflection aimed at the evaluation community, and reflects on the importance of multi-perspective evaluation in the context the Covid-19 pandemic.

2. Collaborative and Culturally Responsive Evaluation

"Evaluation is a scientific endeavor conducted for the purpose of describing the worth, value, and effectiveness of some activity directed to serving a human need or solving a human problem" (Butler, 2020, p. 2). It is an action-oriented exercise that serves to reflect conditions within a particular context over an identified period of time with the specific aim of encouraging and informing decision-making. Evaluations have broad applications in almost all fields and are applied to understanding the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of projects, programs and policies (Butler, 2020). As a scientific endeavour, evaluations follow a research process consisting of developing a research/evaluation question, designing an approach to address this, collecting data, analysing data, making sense of it and sharing the findings.

The two approaches to evaluation in which this study is rooted are collaborative evaluation and culturally responsive evaluation. Both approaches follow the evaluation process described above but each can be understood and distinguished according to how they relate with the evaluation process.

Collaborative Evaluation concerns itself with how the evaluator conducts the evaluation. It involves a “significant degree of collaboration between the evaluator and stakeholders in the evaluation process” (Rodriguez-Campos, 2005, p.1). According to Alkin’s (2004) *Evaluation Roots*, the collaborative evaluation approach is related to participatory evaluation, utilization-focused evaluation, and empowerment evaluation which all share a “strong appreciation for stakeholder involvement in evaluation and a desire for evaluation results to be useful” (O’Sullivan, 2012, p. 518). Collaborative Evaluation enjoins stakeholders to be part of the evaluation team. Their involvement can be further classified along the lines of stakeholder selection for participation, control of evaluation technical decision-making, and depth of participation (Cousins and Earl, 1995). This approach benefits from mixed-method research using both qualitative and quantitative methods to yield and analyse data.

While cultural responsiveness is also reflected as an aspect of Collaborative Evaluation, it does not encompass all the aims of evaluators engaged in Culturally Responsive Evaluation (CRE). As Bryan (2019) explains, proponents of CRE are concerned not only with how evaluations are done but also with specific commitments that they bring to the process. CRE practitioners use this approach with the intention of “addressing intractable social, economic, political, and environmental concerns” (Acree and Chouinard, 2019, p. 1). Though also guided by the same evaluation process, CRE pays close attention to how evaluation questions are framed and to the design of evaluations. Practitioners of this approach assert that sensitivity to cultural differences can add credence to the results of an evaluation. They also reject the view that evaluation is “culture free” and therefore, in the evaluation design stage, evaluators can define what data is deemed meaningful and useful to those within the culture. In keeping with the commitments of the approach toward meaning-making, the practice of evaluation typically involves qualitative data gathering and analysis.

Both forms of evaluation practice speak to the multi-perspective team and collaborative approach discussed in this article. First, evaluators were themselves stakeholders (as alumni and persons engaged in development-related work in their countries). Second, team members occupy many different cultures simultaneously (their community, professional sector, country, but also their class cohort and the university culture) given their diverse backgrounds. Though the evaluation does not specify commitments to social justice as a prerequisite for conducting it, the purpose of the evaluation as a means to improve the master’s programmes’ content and delivery as well as understand and support the impact being made by the graduates relates to this. These approaches to evaluation also foreground questions posed around the decolonization of evaluation, which is discussed in section three.

3. Case Study: Alumni Impact Barometer Study

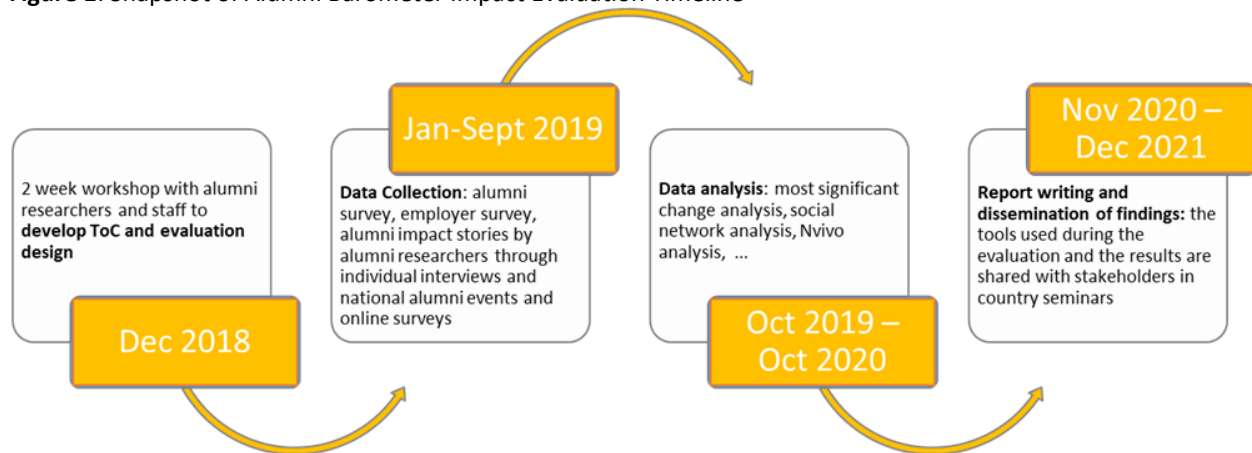
For the Institute of Development Policy (IOB) at the University of Antwerp which offers three advanced master programmes in development studies, higher education is geared toward equipping students to become agents of change impacting policy and practice wherever they choose to apply themselves. In 2018, the IOB through the support of VLIR-UOS and the Global Minds Initiative, had the opportunity to conduct the [Alumni Impact Barometer](#) research using a collaborative and culturally responsive approach to evaluation.

The Alumni Impact Barometer research is an evaluation process that aims to identify the impact of the master’s programmes on the graduate, the organization and on societal ‘development’. It examines how the quality, relevance and impact of the master programmes could be improved. Building on the idea conceptualized by Dassin et al. (2018) that international scholarships open multiple pathways for social change, the research sought to unpack these pathways to materialize and understand impact. The pathways (Dassin et al., 2018 in Casten et al., 2021, p. 21) identified were:

- *Change agent* (leadership abilities, capacity of scholars to generate positive social change through personal action like obtaining higher responsibility or autonomy in their work to promote and support development objectives)
- *Social network* (social change generated through collective action or collaboration of several scholars through the (inter)national alumni networks)
- *Widening access* (women and men from disadvantaged backgrounds accessing postgraduate education to increase the chances of success in life and capacity to contribute to reducing inequality)
- *Academic diversity* (academic institutions become more inclusive, especially in recruitment to cater to students with different academic credentials and challenges)
- *International understanding* (enabling intercultural communication, tolerance and international cooperation between cultures and countries by studying abroad or interacting with other international scholars)

The evaluation process was envisioned to take a period of five years (2018 to 2022) covering four phases: Development of a Theory of Change (ToC) and evaluation design, data collection, data analysis, and the dissemination of the findings (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Snapshot of Alumni Barometer Impact Evaluation Timeline



From the onset, the evaluation adopted an inclusive approach, involving two members of university staff acting as coordinators and engaging a diverse team of alumni from Ethiopia, Nicaragua, the Philippines, Tanzania, Uganda, and Vietnam as co-researchers. This team is engaged in all the different steps of the evaluation: A ToC was elaborated, distinguishing between three levels of impact (individual, organisational, and societal), four learning dimensions (knowledge, skills, attitudes, and networks) and five implicit pathways (change agent, social network, widening access, academic diversity, and international understanding). Data was collected and analysed and dissemination of findings was planned for.

A mixed-method approach was employed combining both qualitative and quantitative methods while also engaging multiple lenses and perspectives to determine impact on the level of the individual graduate, the organisations they work for, and the overall 'impact to development'/society. Data collection instruments included alumni impact story interviews done by fellow alumni, alumni online survey (from cohorts 2000 to 2018), social network data surveys, as well as, pre and post surveys with students and control batch and employer surveys. In making sense of the data collected, the evaluation used multiple methods of analysis including Most Significant Change, Social Network Analysis, and NVIVO to analyse the text (see also Holvoet et al., 2023).

4. Multi-Perspective Team of Collaborators

To find its team of co-researchers participating in this evaluation, the university opened a call among its graduates to join the research project. Several alumni applied and from those applications an international, gender-balanced team was selected. It was composed of members from six countries, representing four continents, and different cohorts of alumni who are each professionally active in various sectors related to development.

The team of multi-perspective collaborators was composed of 17 members from Africa, Asia, and Latin America with evaluation skills and experience. 53% of them were women and 47% were men. They work in five different development-related sectors namely, academia, consultant, civil society, government, and international organization. The group was also representative of different cohorts of alumni having graduated between 2006 to 2019. The 17 team members who pioneered this project were also joined by two other alumni who provided added support for data analysis, especially during the pandemic. Small team cooperation activities and online collaboration continued and accessing localized information was made possible by having team members of the same country work together.

5. Added Value and Potential Pitfalls

In the process of conducting the evaluation, the coordinators of the project ran simultaneous surveys of team members as a way to document their own impressions and ideas around the approach to and content of the evaluation. It was through this exercise that the team identified the added value and potential pitfalls of executing a multi-perspective and collaborative evaluation.

In determining the added value of this approach, we build on Fitzpatrick's assertion that "evaluators have long been concerned with involving others in evaluation to collaborate with clients and others on program development, improvement, and the evaluation itself" (Fitzpatrick 2012, 558). The history of the field shows how much it has evolved from an archetypal, single perspective approach toward more collaboration and participation of multiple stakeholders, and diversity in evaluation. This evaluation does not offer a model but rather, builds on these existing paradigms with the aim of producing an evaluation that is made more valid and responsive to the context and culture of the programme by way of collaboration, learning, and contributing based on different areas of expertise that alumni co-researchers have.

Further, as an institution of higher education offering programs in Development Studies (for nearly two decades) to students from diverse national, professional, and cultural backgrounds, it has the necessary characteristics that allow it to conduct evaluations that are responsive to the concerns of feasibility, credibility, and competence identified by Fitzpatrick et al. (2010) as possible challenges encountered when applying participative and collaborative methods. This is explained in the succeeding sections that examine the added value of a multi-perspective and collaborative team approach to evaluation that is differentiated through three main domains: Learning, Accountability, and Process (Table 1).

Table 1: Added Value of a Multi-perspective Evaluation Approach

		Alumni Barometer multi perspective Evaluation		Archetypical ‘single perspective’ evaluation	
LEARNING	Definition of impact & ToC	More inclusive /perspectives	++	One dimensional definition	+
	Data quality	Trust → better quality data	++	One size fits all impact	+
	Interpretation of the data	Insider perspective	++	More distant evaluator/ outsider perspective	+
	Comparability	Multi country team & shared IOB culture	+	Standardised approach	++
ACCOUNTABILITY	Locus of accountability	Multi loci	++	Single locus	+
	Standards of goal accomplishment	Multiple visions on development impact	++	‘Belgian tax payer’ vision of development impact	+
PROCESS	Evaluation Process	Highly integrated local-global	++	Less integrated local-global	+
	‘Decolonising’ Evaluation	• Evaluation Question	✗	• Evaluation Question	✗
		• Evaluation design, instruments, ToC	✓	• Evaluation design, instruments, ToC	✗
		• Data collection	✓	• Data collection	✓
		• Data Analysis	✓	• Data Analysis	✗
		• Dissemination	✓	• Dissemination	✗

The +/ ++ indicate the degree to which the dimension is operationalised in the evaluation approach.

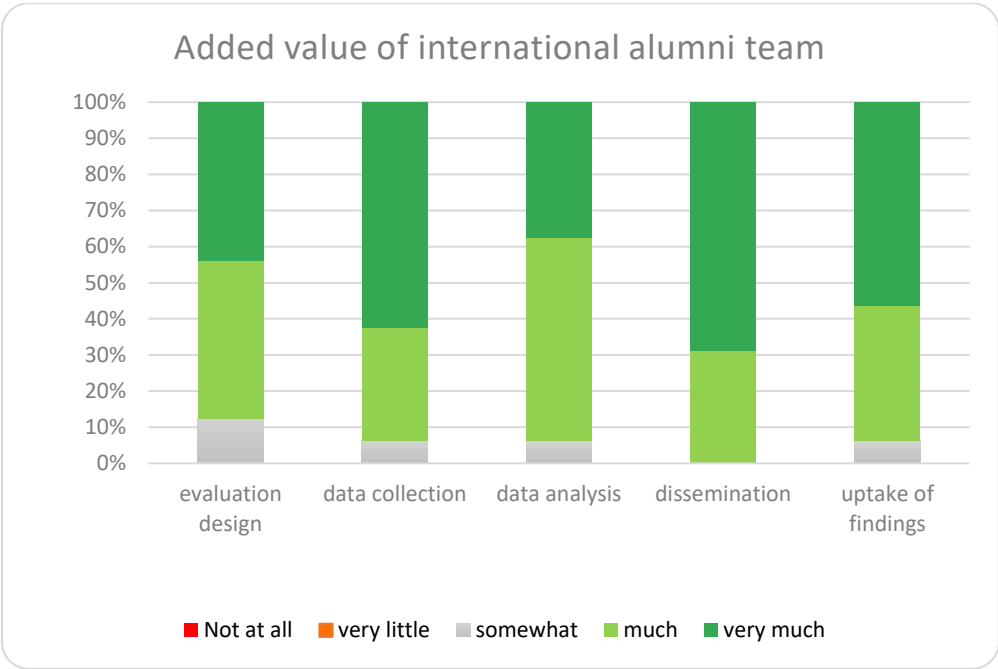
The ✓/✗ signals presence or absence of stakeholder/ co-researcher active participation in this phase of the evaluation

5.1. Learning

Learning pertains to the aims of the evaluation process itself. The purpose of evaluating the graduates' impact on development was, first and foremost, to learn about how alumni are able to make a contribution to development and how the education programmes and modalities can be improved to further strengthen those contributions.

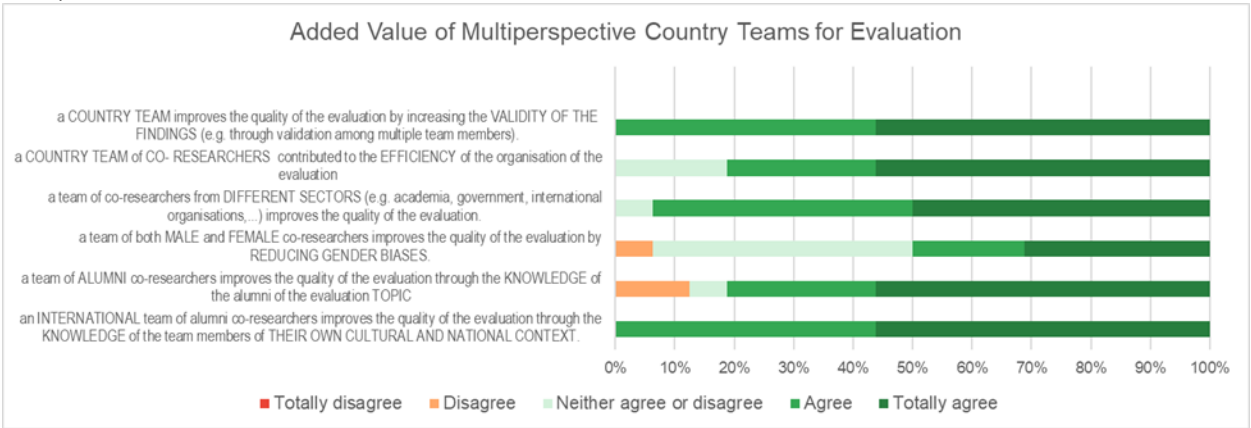
To this end, the composition of the alumni evaluation team had a significant effect on the added value of this multi-perspective approach to evaluation. Among the evaluators themselves, 88 percent were of the belief that this approach was (very) much an added value for the design of the evaluation. In fact, the team members (Figure 2) perceive a clear added value throughout all the different steps of the evaluation process, most notably in the data collection phase (94%), analysis (94%), the dissemination (100%) of findings and stimulating uptake (94%).

Figure 1: Added value of working with an inclusive team (differentiated according to phase of the evaluation project)



When team members were asked to evaluate which particular aspect of the ‘inclusive’ team composition they perceived as having added value for the evaluation research, results (see Figure 3) show a very high added value for all constituting elements of the team set up: being an alumnus/a, having an international team, working in country team, being gender-balanced in setup, having a composition of multiple sectors. The most shared view among the research team is the (very) high added value of having international team members who through their knowledge of their own country and culture can improve data quality, followed by working with a country team which can increase the validity of the findings as several researchers from the same country evaluate together. Also having members from different sectors seems to be an important constituting element. Slightly lower is the fact that the researchers are alumni, and not surprisingly the gender balance in the team seemed to contribute less. The latter could be because gender composition was actually only balanced in the aggregate of the research team, but not in the individual country teams.

Figure 2: Added value of working with an inclusive team (differentiated according to constituting dimensions of the team).



5.1.1. More inclusive definition of impact & Theory of Change

Having a multi-perspective team of evaluators results in more inclusive definitions of the objects of inquiry. The evaluation question concerning the impact of the master's programmes on the individual, the organization, and society may not have been defined by the team of alumni co-researchers but the operationalization of this question could not have been possible without them. Understanding the evaluation question from a multi-perspective lens formed the foundation for the co-creation of the evaluation design. In unpacking the meaning of impact and operationalizing it in both the country contexts where they work and within the shared global context that emerged from discussions among co-researchers, the team aided in clarifying the object of inquiry: the graduate's impact on development.

The concept is plagued with vagueness and could also encompass different dimensions such as: What constitutes development? Is it only through professional work that one has an impact or do private life activities count as well? What about attribution and contribution?

The team had intense discussions on the definitions of impact as well as on the various draft versions of the theory of change (ToC). In small groups that maintained an international, gender balanced and sectoral diversity, conversations were held to unpack these concepts and the main points were reported back to the entire team in a plenary discussion. As part of the evaluation's aim of capacitating team members with additional research/evaluation skills, some members of the team were appointed 'captain,' and tasked to lead discussions producing intermediate output based on their own expertise (which they had indicated prior to joining the barometer impact study). These intense, in-depth discussions (on the ToC, the evaluation questions, and the evaluation design) with a multi perspective team lead to a more inclusive, all-encompassing approach to the study topic and the evaluation design.

The concept of impact while vague is strangely comprehensible to alumni bound by their shared education experience. This evaluation process provided the foundation for the research team to discuss the meaning of impact from the point of view of the alumni who had themselves gone through a similar programme. Their familiarity with the content facilitated and put into context the responses of their fellow alumni collected through impact story interviews. One team member shares that through her participation in this study, she learned that impact has multiple meanings across regions. For instance, in Vietnam, impact is understood in relation to social change and movements while among her African peers, the measure of impact was in accordance with development interventions. Exposure to different conceptions of impact, in turn, informs the programme's decision-making as far as determining in which ways it would like to position itself as an institution that seeks to capacitate change agents.

Regarding the data collection phase, two main added values can be discerned. The first relates to the ability to collect better data and the second concerns its interpretation. Data is better read and interpreted by the alumni researchers based on their deeper understanding of the context in which the data is generated.

5.1.2. Better data quality

The process of data collection involved having alumni co-researchers conduct interviews with fellow alumni (impact stories), employers, and collect social network data in the country where they are based. This meant, for example, that impact stories of Ethiopian alumni were mostly collected and processed by the Ethiopian team members. This enabled the collection of higher quality data which is also evidenced in the transcripts of some of the interviews which shows a rapport and understanding between the interviewer and interviewee. Practical concerns such as language were also easily addressed as the interviewers themselves were well-versed in their native languages. Apart from the comfort derived from this, the element of trust can also be explained by having peer-evaluators share cultures with the respondents. Both share the study experience which could constitute a culture (shared knowledge and experience of studying development-related topics in Belgium) and their own country culture. This type of embeddedness in culture allows the researchers to generate "thick" data. The level of trust also provides an

environment conducive to constructive criticism. Asking critical questions becomes possible in a space where participants feel safe engaging with each other and speaking candidly without fear of repercussions. Hence, some discussions allowed alumni researchers to surface concerns specific to students from particular countries without hesitation or resistance to probing inquiries. Normally, course or programme evaluations are done anonymously and consist of filling out a form which while helpful to the institutions, do not provide the same avenue for candidness and the explanation of one's answers.

5.1.3. More accurate interpretation of data

Not only does a multi-perspective team provide an advantage in terms of the quality of the data being collected, it also increases the understanding of what that data means. This refers to the earlier point made about respondents and alumni researchers having shared lived experiences (Askew et al. 2012, 554). Their knowledge of the education programmes as alumni themselves combined with their understanding of the local (professional) development arena in which the graduates operate, strengthens the alumni researchers' understanding of what the respondents mean in their responses.

5.1.4. Comparability

One possible pitfall in working with a multiple country team as opposed to having one consultant evaluating all the different programmes in a standardized way, could be in terms of the comparability of the findings across the impact in different countries.

While important to recognize, the focus of the evaluation was geared more toward the learning dimension rather than accountability and so, comparability is deemed less crucial than deep understanding from the outset.

Yet, maintaining a minimum degree of comparability and standardization across the evaluation findings in different countries is important. To allow for the richness of culturally responsive evaluation, while at the same time ensuring comparability of the findings across the different countries, the team used a combination of different tools and different evaluation team compositions. This meant enabling deep localized understanding through exercises on Most Significant Change, collection of alumni impact stories, etc. while others contributed to a standardized, cross-country level playing field methodology of online alumni surveys, categorization of impact stories, and NVIVO analysis. Country teams could evaluate 'development impact' for some tools based on their own reading of what impact means in their own setting. For other tools a global trans-cultural perspective was taken (*local-in-global approach*). A shared university culture among graduates as well as a joint developing and calibrating of the research instruments makes using a same evaluation framework easier despite cultural differences.

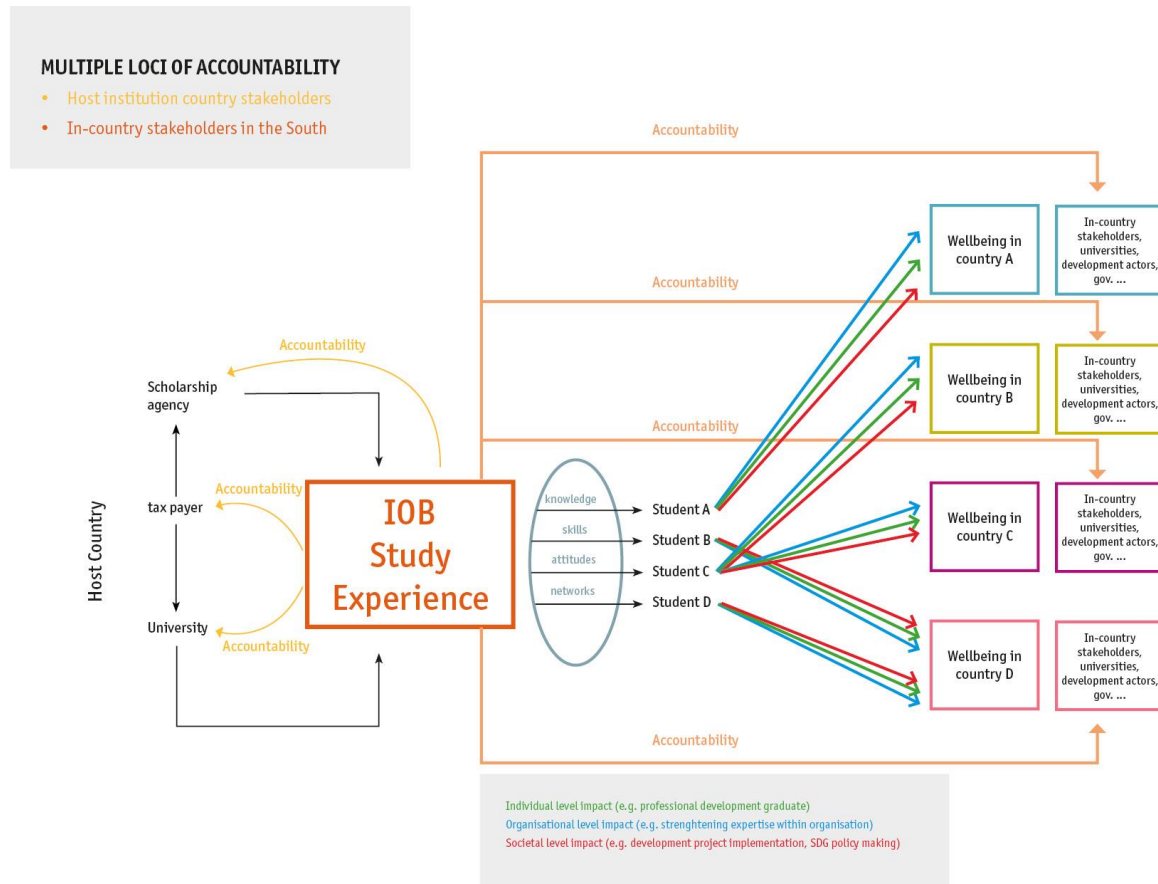
5.2. Accountability

Besides using the findings of the evaluation to improve the programmes' relevance and quality (learning), this type of evaluation also serves the purpose of accountability. Scholarship agencies, financed by government and taxpayers, need to show that investing in scholarships for (advanced) master studies in donor countries is good value for money compared to other potential investments in development cooperation. Being able to showcase that graduates indeed make a 'contribution to development' therefore serves the purpose of being accountable towards the host country's tax payers.

Figure 4 demonstrates how the scholarship agency provides scholarships to students from developing countries with the aim to contribute to development. During their study experience, students learn and deepen existing knowledge and skills, gain new ideas and form networks. They then either return to their home country, stay in the host country, or choose another destination where they can make a contribution to development based on what they have gained

during the study experience. This contribution can be at individual level, at the organizational level and at the societal level.

Figure 3: Overview of multiple loci of accountability relations



5.2.1. Multi-loci

In the course of the evaluation process, it was noted that having the ‘host country tax payer’ perspective or by extension the scholarship agency as the only locus of accountability appeared to be too limited given that contribution to development is the subject of the evaluation. Having a multi-perspective team also centered the need to understand ‘development impact’ in relation to the different localities identified by alumni based on their work.

The appraisal of whether the ‘development impact’ is relevant and worthwhile should also be done in the society where the contribution is being made. Local stakeholders such as universities, government agencies, civil society organizations and other alumni should be involved in reflecting on the value of these contributions and how the education programmes and subsequent alumni policy could be reinforced to make those contributions even more meaningful or impactful based on the country’s strategy for development. In line with the latter argument, the dissemination seminars where the results of the evaluation study will be presented, will not be limited to the host country, as home of the education institution, but also take place in each of the case study countries (Ethiopia, Nicaragua, Philippines, Tanzania, Uganda, and Vietnam) in which various stakeholders will be invited to share their perspectives on the findings and suggestions for improvement. Engaging stakeholders in this manner allows them

to assess whether the contribution to development in their context is made possible by sending students abroad for an advanced degree or open up discussions on the possibility of developing learning centers in their countries.

5.3. Evaluation Process

The evaluation process has been designed in a manner that encourages collaboration among the researchers who bring multiple skills and a variety of backgrounds to the evaluation. Working in a multi-perspective environment allows participants to share knowledge and skills and nurture a culture of learning throughout the evaluation.

5.3.1. *Local-in-Global*

As discussed in the previous section, this evaluation looks at both the local and the global through its concern for understanding contribution to development and improving education quality for an international/global programme. In terms of evaluation, the process allowed for local knowledge and culture to be applied in a global study (local-in-global approach). This is an added value of the evaluation because the process acknowledges and supports local expertise and engages it in a global study. Alumni researchers are sharing their competence and enhancing it at the same time through the evaluation process.

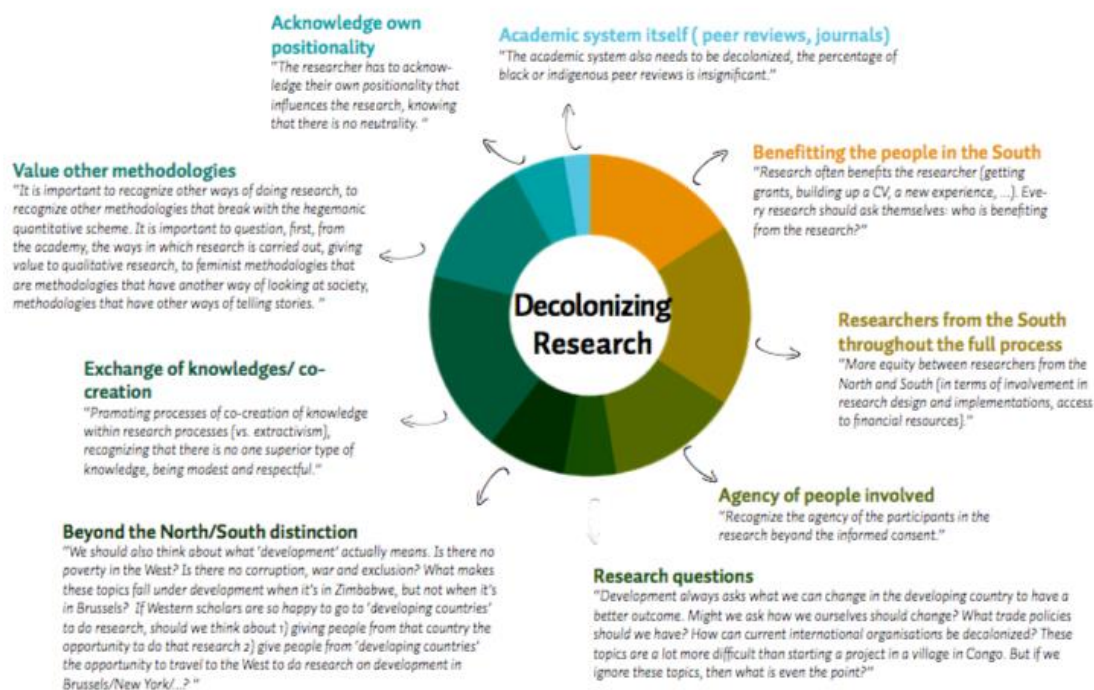
It is worth mentioning that this local and global dynamic is navigable for the university due to its multi-perspective ecosystem. This is particularly relevant in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic which began while the evaluation was already ongoing. While recognized as a global concern, the impact of the pandemic is made clearer at a local level. The limitations on travel and movement also necessitate that information be gathered locally by those who know their contexts best. Planning for responses to global challenges like Covid-19 and climate change benefit from localized knowledge but also need platforms for collaboration among multi-perspective planners and evaluators.

5.3.2. *Development Studies and Decolonization*

The collaborative evaluation process speaks to wider debates happening in the university and other schools offering Development Studies programmes. Ongoing discussions point to the need to critically reflect on the content and aims of Development Studies programmes since some institutions are still fashioned in the Western colonial mould and need to change. Evaluations can aid in defining what change means in this context. Similarly, among development agencies working in different countries in the Global South, there have also been more visible attempts at applying reflective approaches to evaluation. The evaluation community recognizes the importance of CRE and benefits from its practice in this regard.

Regarding decolonization, a recent 2020 survey among the institute's graduates on decolonizing research already offers ways forward to complement this evaluation study. The graph below summarizes the main dimensions put forward (Figure 5). First of all, several graduates stated that research in development studies should benefit people in the South and not merely serve academic output of Northern based researchers.

Figure 5: Alumni perspectives on Decolonizing Research



Linked to that, it was often pointed out that research should involve researchers from the South who are being involved throughout the entire research process and not only work as data collectors as is often the case now. Likewise, stakeholders should not be regarded as mere respondents, but research should recognize the agency of the persons involved in the research project. Some respondents highlighted that the first point of decolonization starts actually with the identification of the research question, which is often decided by a Northern based university or think tank, as they receive the funding and hence hold the purse strings. Some also called for a move beyond the North/South distinction entrenched in development studies and study development in all its perspectives all over the world. This means for example the possibility of having researchers from the South studying development topics in the North and seeing development as it occurs all over the world rather than just in the Global South.

Apart from the research question, concerning the theories underpinning the study, several respondents in the 2020 survey suggest a greater openness to other types of knowledge and theories, than the ones in the hegemonic theoretical framework, leaving room for the co-creation of new knowledge and theories based on knowledge from all over the world and from in depth understanding of the local context. Similarly, they propose to also broaden the scope of methodologies used in research projects to other types of methodologies which might be better suited to investigating the topic under study. Researchers should also acknowledge and make explicit their own positionality to others involved in the research process. Finally, some respondents also highlighted a need to change the academic system itself, with the journals and peer reviewers being dominated by Western based academia.

These suggestions of the 2020 'decolonization' survey amongst alumni can easily be applied to this evaluation especially owing to the multi-perspective team. Indeed, co-researchers are also co-authors in the (academic) output generated through the study. The team members were involved in the entire process – and contributed significantly to the operationalization of the evaluation question. The evaluation process moved beyond the North/South distinction in development by studying the contribution of alumni of the case study countries irrespective of whether they were in their home country or in the 'North' for their contribution to development. While the insights posed by the decolonization survey are of value to the institution itself, these also feed into a larger debate in Development Studies.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This article discusses the added value of having a multi-perspective team approach to multi-country evaluations. It focuses on the case of the Alumni Impact Barometer study that engaged 17 alumni co-researchers to evaluate impact and contribution to development among graduates of the institute.

This approach of multi-perspective team evaluation is rooted in collaborative and culturally responsive evaluation. It also provides the foundation for decolonizing research and evaluation in the field of development and development studies. The article identified the added value of this approach in three dimensions: learning, accountability, and the evaluation process itself.

In terms of learning, the added value comes from a more inclusive process that yields better data and better defines the object under evaluation (development impact), based on the multiple perspectives offered by the diverse pool of co-researchers. Higher data quality is a result of trust between evaluators and their respondents while better data collection and interpretation is due to the deeper understanding of the local culture. There is also the possibility to combine culturally sensitive localized evaluation tools with different global team compositions (*local-in-global*) to make the findings comparable.

The added value for accountability is in the multi-loci view of impact to include not only the host country taxpayer and the scholarship agency perspective but also shifting the view to in-country stakeholders. Evaluation then is not only to the benefit of the host country or institute but also to the people and places where the graduates apply their impact. Using evaluation to ask critical questions in safe spaces also allows for feedback on the relevance of education programmes and the modalities of organizing development studies.

As for the process itself, collaborative learning through a multi-perspective team capacitates all co-researchers through an exchange of knowledge and skills. In increasing the competence of evaluators embedded in their own contexts who are also involved in a global project, local expertise is drawn from, valued, and elevated. This provides the foundation for a shift toward decolonizing research, evaluation, and education.

This article presents an example of CRE as it is applied in the context of education and development studies. However, the added value of a collaborative, multi-perspective team approach to evaluation resonates beyond higher education and Development Studies. The Covid-19 pandemic struck as the evaluation process was underway. This meant shifting to an online work system and relying on local alumni evaluators to give a clearer idea of what is happening in their contexts. Generating local knowledge during a global pandemic is vital in addressing the crisis. Limited mobility has meant increased use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and greater reliance on local experts to conduct localized evaluations. However, the pandemic revealed gaps in the way this local knowledge informs global responses.

Points for Reflection

As a global problem, Covid-19 spread throughout the world but its impacts were felt diversely across countries, class, ethnicity, gender, etc. A multi-perspective and collaborative evaluation may aid in unpacking and operationalizing this impact. Questions worth pondering are:

- How can we use CRE to surface the concerns of those disproportionately affected by the pandemic?
- What systems and new forms of knowledge production will be developed considering limits to mobility and increased reliance on local evaluators?
- What global platforms will be built to not only capture these contexts but also drive collaboration and multi-perspective evaluation that inspires culturally responsive decision making around Covid-19 response?

Covid-19 has exposed huge gaps in data collection and analysis across multiple issues that impact the well-being of people. There is no better time to engage in multi-perspective and inclusive evaluations than now.

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