🌻 ToC and causal maps in Ghana – Summary (book chapter)

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(Powell et al. 2023)

Source: book chapter draft in `content/000 Articles/020 !! toc book chapter.md`.

- **Purpose**
- Show how QuIP-style causal mapping can compare an official programme ToC ("their theory") with empirically coded beneficiary narratives ("our theory"), as a disciplined way to revise ToCs and "middle-level theory".

- **Minimal definition (what a causal map is)**

- A causal map is nodes + directed links, where a link means (at minimum) *someone believes C influenced E*.
- Links need not encode necessity/sufficiency, nor quantified strength/polarity (though those are sometimes added in other approaches).

- **QuIP as causal mapping**

- Goal-free / (partially) blindfolded elicitation of stories of change reduces confirmation bias.
- "Causal back-chaining" elicits causes, causes-of-causes, etc.
- Coding is inductive and multi-source; maps are then filtered/queried to answer evaluation questions.

- **How analysis is actually done**

- Global maps are too large; use filters (e.g. theme/keyword searches, distance steps, frequency thresholds).
- **Hierarchical coding / zooming out**: encode subfactors in factor labels so detailed factors can be rolled up into higher-level factors for readable summary maps.
- Evidence strength is often shown with counts on links (mentions / sources).

- **Interpretation pitfalls (explicitly listed)**

- **Beliefs about causation are not facts about causation**: evaluator judgement remains separate.
- **Absence of a mentioned link is not evidence of absence** (random-walk conversations; negative cases).
- **Transitivity trap / context overlap**: stitching A→B (source 1) and B→C (source 2) does not justify A→C unless contexts overlap.
- Aggregation/generalisation is non-trivial; counts support confidence but don't convert to "truth percentages".

References

Powell, Larquemin, Copestake, Remnant, & Avard (2023). *Does Our Theory Match Your Theory? Theories of Change and Causal Maps in Ghana.* In *Strategic Thinking, Design and the Theory of Change. A Framework for Designing Impactful and Transformational Social Interventions.*