Drawing the Line: Participatory Evaluation Research with Young People

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A Typical Scenario:

"By youth, for youth"

- Do children benefit from the program?
- How can we replicate the program?

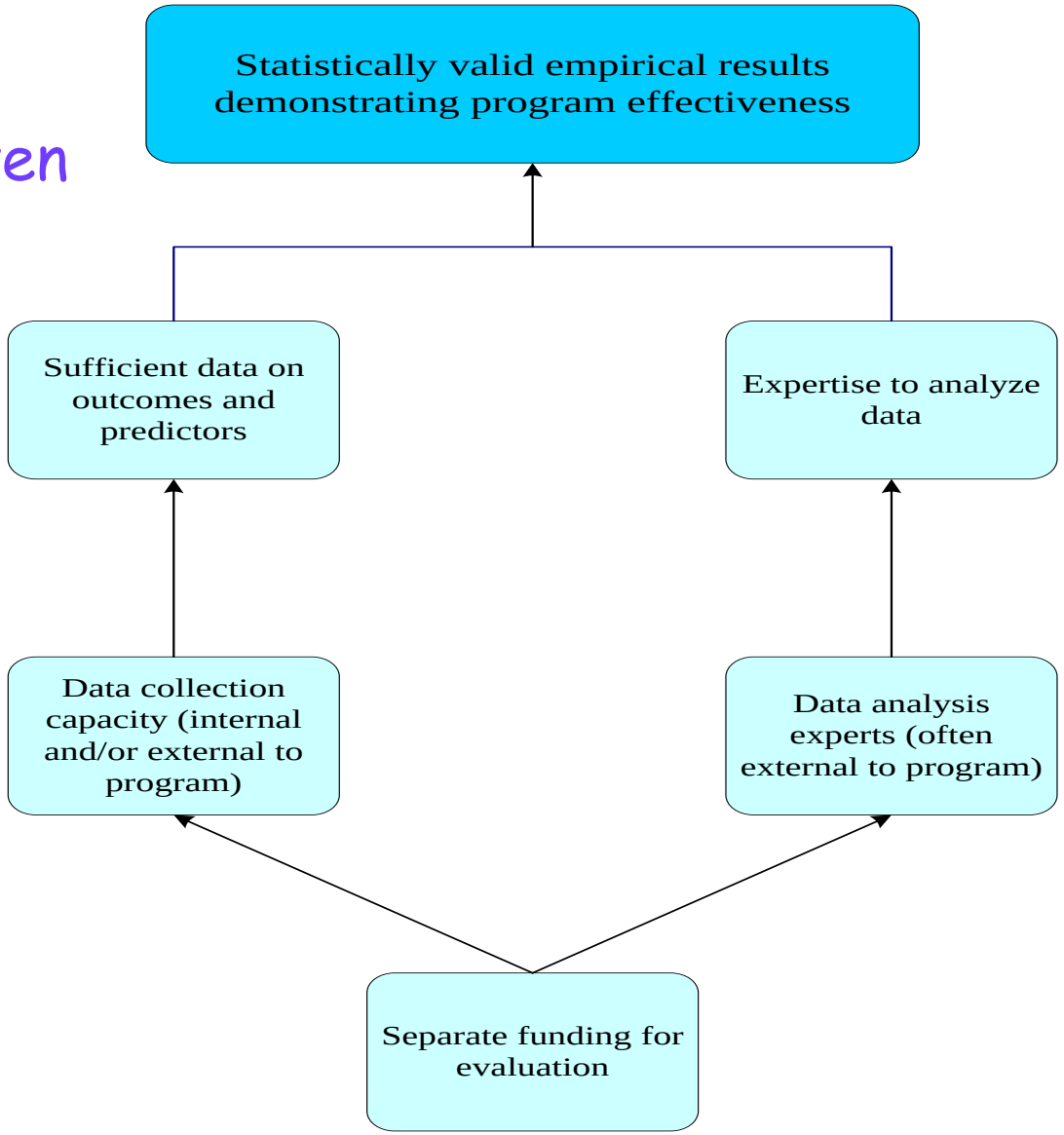
Common struggles:

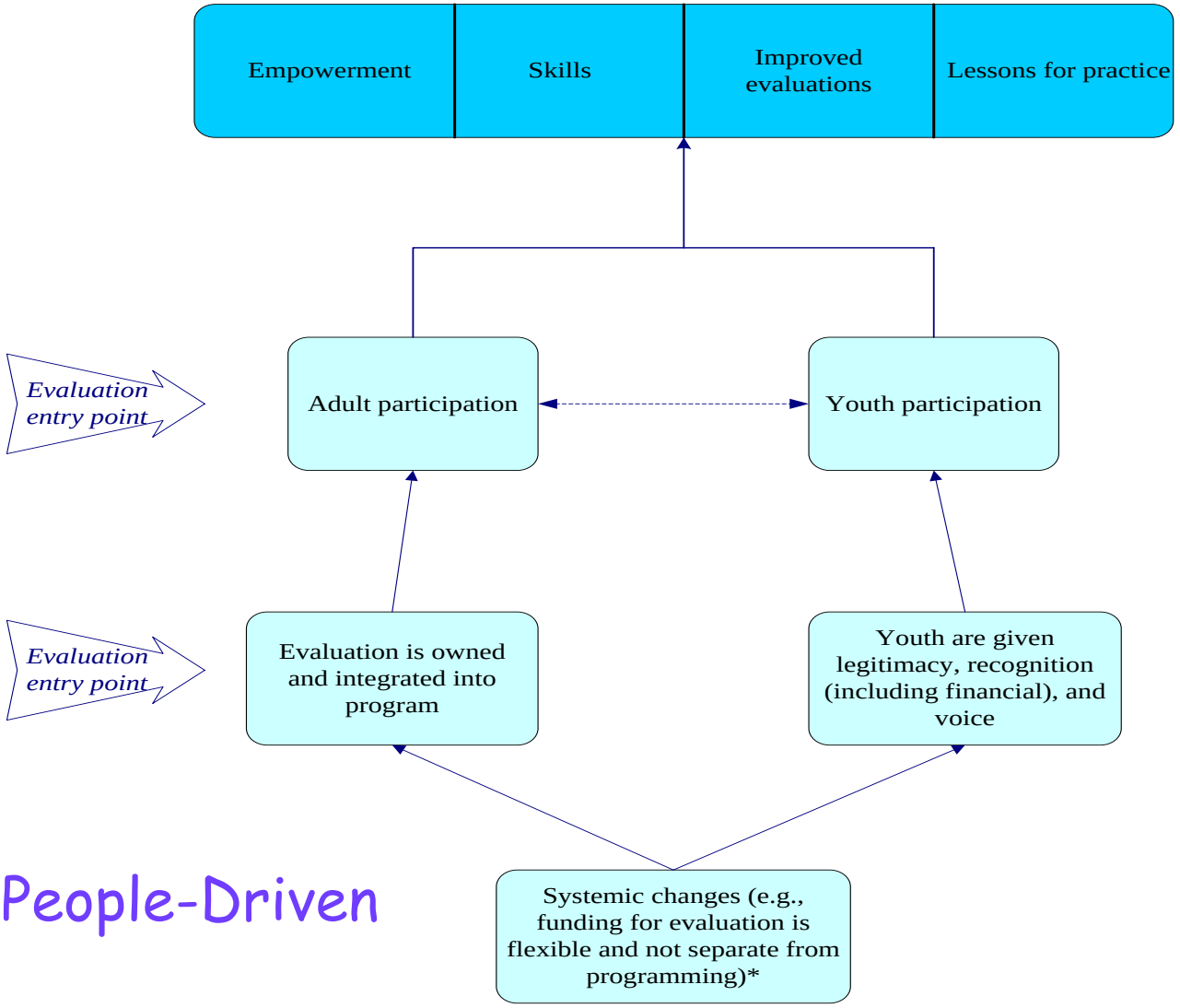
- Limited funds → limited evaluation time
- Program staff has limited time, evaluation is a "burden"
- Funders' goals:

  improve test scores
- Program goals?
- Children's goals?

How do evaluators negotiate their roles as researchers when they adopt a participatory approach with young people?

Systems or Data-Driven Framework



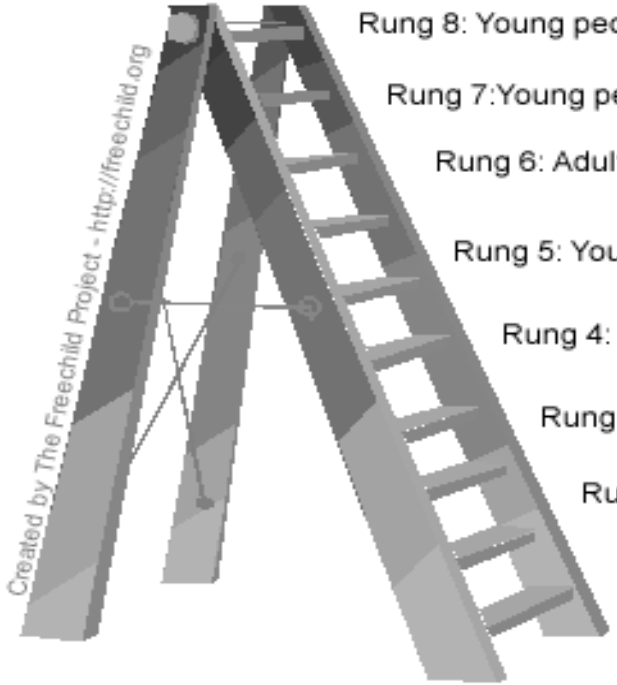


Process or People-Driven Framework

*We recognize that "systemic change" is very general and idealistic. With the status quo, evaluation with youth participation can still take place at the "evaluation entry points," but without bigger changes, we believe that it will always be difficult to sustain youth participation and to make it truly meaningful.

Involving Young People

Roger Hart's Ladder of Young People's Participation



Rung 8: Young people & adults share decision-making

Rung 7:Young people lead & initiate action

Rung 6: Adult-initiated, shared decisions with young people

Rung 5: Young people consulted and informed

Rung 4: Young people assigned and informed

Rung 3: Young people tokenized*

Rung 2: Young people are decoration*

Rung 1: Young people are manipulated*

Note: Hart explains that the last three rungs are *non-participation*

Adapted from Hart, R. (1992). *Children's Participation from Tokenism to Citizenship*. Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.

Helpful Strategies for Involving Young People:

1. Theory-driven evaluation
2. Allow youth to define and understand the problem and methods
3. Use creative and appropriate methods
4. Develop relationships among adults, youth, and subgroups of youth

Workshop Instructions:

- Introduce yourself as your assigned character to the group and state your goal for this evaluation.
- Your group should design a participatory evaluation involving young people on your assigned topic.

Keep the following in mind:

- Your group should arrive at a feasible and relevant research question
- Use creative and realistic methods that can yield valid results
- Focus on building capacity
- Address the power relations