

# Inspiring Principles

## Distinguishing Overarching Principles from Operational Principles



CHARMAGNE CAMPBELL-PATTON

Charmagne Campbell-Patton comes to evaluation with a strong background in youth civic engagement, including capacity building around global citizenship. Youth are motivated by two things: peers and what they care about. If they don't care about what is going on, and their friends aren't with them, forget about it. Charmagne has found that youth resonate to and are inspired by global principles like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. I am grateful to

ChildFund International for sharing this example and to Charmagne for writing about and sharing her experiences. I am especially pleased that Charmagne, my daughter and the mother of my granddaughter, has been bitten by the evaluation bug and has become an evaluator. (For a more general treatment of conceptualizing and evaluating the complexities of youth civic engagement, see Campbell-Patton & Patton, 2010.)

—M. Q. P.

### ChildFund International

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the most rapidly and widely ratified international human rights treaty in history. The Convention changed the way children are viewed and treated—i.e., as human beings with a distinct set of rights instead of as passive objects of care and charity. The unprecedented acceptance of the Convention

clearly shows a wide global commitment to advancing children's rights.

—UNICEF on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

**ChildFund International is a children's charity that works in over 25 countries around the world to improve the lives of**

young people from birth to young adulthood. Over the last few years, they have developed a new model for Youth Civic Engagement and Leadership (YCEL). This model was based on extensive research in the field as well as on ChildFund's experience in child participation and youth civic engagement<sup>1</sup> throughout the Americas region and was intended to be adapted by local partners in the various countries where ChildFund operates.

Before beginning to implement programs based on the model, however, ChildFund was already thinking about evaluation. A dream client, right? It wanted to be sure that as it rolled out the model in different local environments, it was gathering the data to understand whether and how the model was working in these different situations. ChildFund also wanted to be sure that lessons from each local community fed back into the model so that it continued to develop based on experiences in the field.

Beginning in early 2015, I began working with the program development team at ChildFund to create a situation assessment guide that could walk local partners through a process of identifying assets and barriers to youth civic engagement and leadership in their communities. The process would provide a baseline for evaluation and inform program development. Since it was also participatory, involving a core group of stakeholders, including youth, it was also part of the initial intervention. This will become important later, but just hold on to that thought for now.

ChildFund decided to pilot the situation assessment process in the United States with one of its longest-standing partners—Operation Shoestring—which provides year-round academic, social, and emotional

support to elementary, middle, and high school children in Jackson, Mississippi. While the organization had not done youth civic engagement programming before, they had deep ties to the local community and the ability to engage a range of stakeholders in the process to develop a solid program model.

## Inspiration

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I spent some time with the staff of Operation Shoestring training them in developmental evaluation and walking them through the situation assessment process before they engaged the broader community. Over the next several months, they held three stakeholder sessions where they mapped the youth civic engagement and leadership landscape in Jackson. They also connected with another youth leadership program and were able to engage youth in workshops and activities that explored their perspectives on the community. During these workshops, Operation Shoestring staff also introduced the youth to the Declaration of the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 1959), which is a framing document for ChildFund's youth civic engagement model. Many of the youth had never heard of this document and were unaware that they had rights as children in the community. As they began to learn about their rights and assess the extent to which they were being upheld (or infringed upon) in their community, *many youth seemed inspired by the idea that they were rights holders.*

After nearly a year of engaging the community in the situation assessment process, Operation Shoestring, ChildFund, and I came back together for an adaptive action session to ask three deceptively simple questions: What? So what? Now what? Together, we discussed the findings of the situation assessment, identified key themes and priority areas, discussed potential barriers, and made a plan for how to use the information gathered to inform program

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<sup>1</sup>ChildFund defines civic engagement as an organized action by a person or group that benefits the community and leads to the realization that young people exercising their rights and leadership have the skills to help a group of people reach a common goal.

development and as a baseline for a developmental evaluation that would support the program as it developed and adapted during its first year.

## Principles Emerge

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Also, out of the adaptive action session emerged a set of 15 operating principles based on ChildFund's YCEL model. When we shared these principles with Michael Patton, he suggested grouping the operating principles into a few overarching principles in order to highlight those that are most inspirational, while making them easier to work with and evaluate. Exhibit 17.1 presents the working principles that emerged from the situation assessment in Jackson.<sup>2</sup>

So what's next for this project? These principles will inform program development and form the basis for developmental evaluation. We will gather real-time data with the youth involved in the program to identify the extent to which these principles are being upheld in the program and whether they need to be adapted based on emerging opportunities or challenges. In short, we will engage in a principles-focused developmental evaluation.

### Practice Exercise

In the development of principles "many youth seemed inspired by the idea that they were rights holders." What does this mean? What does this observation suggest about "rights" as a source of inspiration in this case? What would be evidence that youth felt inspired?

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<sup>2</sup>For other examples of distinguishing general overarching principles from more specific operating principles, see Chapters 29 and 31. One advantage of this distinction, when a group has generated lots of principles, is that all or most suggestions for principles can be included among operating principles to give voice and ownership to all who have participated, but only a small number are considered overarching principles to make the recall and use of principles manageable. Some groups prefer to treat operating principles as "practices" and call them that; doing so is also a viable solution to having too many overarching principles.—M. Q. P.

**EXHIBIT 17.1. Working Principles from the Situation Assessment**

Principles	Overarching principle defined	Operating principles to implement overarching principles
1. <b>Youth vision principle</b>	Support youth to dream of a better reality for themselves, their community, and the world.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide young people with opportunities to reflect on and explore their own identity, situation, and community.</li> <li>• Support skills and competence in meaningful and inspirational vision statements.</li> <li>• Create an inclusive process that ensures broad representation of youth from different backgrounds and a feedback loop where a core group of youth takes back their ideas and plans to a larger group of youth.</li> </ul>
2. <b>Youth voice principle</b>	Support youth to develop and express their own perspective and voice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create spaces for young people to associate and develop their voice.</li> <li>• Build community openness to and valuing of youth perspectives.</li> <li>• Create interactive opportunities for the community to hear from young people.</li> <li>• Ensure that young people have the opportunity to express their unique needs and interests and speak as a group distinct from adults.</li> </ul>
3. <b>Youth authentic inclusion principle</b>	Create opportunities for active and meaningful participation of young people in the daily life of the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a community environment that includes and values the involvement and contributions of youth.</li> <li>• Promote authentic and ongoing inclusion of youth in any process or institution that affects their lives or those of their families.</li> <li>• Support youth to identify and take action to benefit themselves and their community.</li> </ul>
4. <b>Community valuing youth principle</b>	Promote a view of youth as assets to the community who can make a positive contribution toward social change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that young people have access to information to enhance their civic knowledge and inform their participation.</li> <li>• Create opportunities for youth and adults to build relationships based on mutual understanding and respect.</li> </ul>
5. <b>Youth development principle</b>	Provide opportunities for youth to develop knowledge and skills for effective civic participation and leadership that will benefit them throughout their lives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce barriers for youth from different backgrounds to come together and work together.</li> </ul>

# Principles-Focused Pedagogy of Evaluation

## Inspired by Freirean Pedagogy

Paulo Freire left us the legacy of ethical-political roots to support our practices—wings, that is, a theory to go beyond his work; and many dreams—the utopia of a society of equals; or, as he affirms at the end of *Pedagogia do Oprimido* (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*): “the creation of a world in which it will be easier to love.”

—MOACIR GADOTTI, Director, Instituto Paulo Freire,  
São Paulo, Brazil

Paulo Freire has been an inspiration to millions. He epitomized what it means to be principles driven. I was inspired by Freire as a graduate student in the turbulent 1960s. In 2014, on a trip to Brazil, I had the opportunity to reconnect with his writings and found them inspirational in a new and unexpected way. He conceptualized and articulated a *pedagogy of the oppressed*. That is well known, as is the globally enduring influence of his pedagogical principles and practices. But what inspired me was the implications of his approach for a *principles-based pedagogy of evaluation*. This chapter, like the preceding chapter, aims to elaborate and elucidate the *I* in the GUIDE framework: inspiration. Principles inspire. Freire’s writings have inspired a principles-focused pedagogy of evaluation (Patton, 2017b).

Pedagogy is the study of teaching. *Pedagogy of evaluation* entails examining how and what evaluation teaches. There is no

singular or monolithic pedagogy of evaluation. Embedded in different evaluation approaches are varying assumptions, values, premises, priorities, and sense-making processes. Those who participate in an evaluation are experiencing sometimes explicit, more often implicit and tacit, pedagogical principles. Evaluation invites stakeholders involved to see the world in a certain way, to make sense of what is being evaluated through a particular lens, to make judgments based on certain kinds of evidence and values.

Pedagogy of evaluation is inspired by and builds on the works of Paulo Freire, especially his classic *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. His other books include *Pedagogy of Indignation*, *Pedagogy of Hope*, *Pedagogy of Freedom*, *Ecopedagogy*, and *Critical Pedagogy*.

Those evaluation approaches that have been most influenced by Freirean pedagogy and share Freirean values, modes of engagement, and desired outcomes are