Evaluation: A Learning Function

Ian C Davies
Past President
European Evaluation Society

EVALUATION IN DEMOCRACY
European Parliament
Brussels
April 10, 2013
Professional career: relevant highlights

• Advisor to the President of the Treasury Board of Canada on Performance Reporting to Parliament.
• Advisor to the European Court of Auditors on Sound Financial Management, i.e. performance audit.
• Advisor to the European Commission on the implementation of the organisation and systems for evaluation (1996 Communication on Evaluation).
• Director, Performance Audit & Accountability (Auditor General of BC, Canada).

EVALUATION IN DEMOCRACY
European Parliament
Dual purpose of accountability and learning

Predominance of classic accountability paradigm

“Obligation to account for a responsibility conferred”

“Accountability is a relationship based on obligations to demonstrate, review, and take responsibility for performance, both the results achieved in light of agreed expectations and the means used.” (Auditor General of Canada)
Assurance – the contribution of audit

Performance audit

The “WHAT” question

Limitations of audit

EVALUATION IN DEMOCRACY
European Parliament
Intelligence and knowledge – the contribution of evaluation

WHAT, WHY, SO WHAT, FOR WHO?

Policy level learning

Values, social capital, public interest

EVALUATION IN DEMOCRACY
European Parliament
Organisational level learning

From knowledge to understanding to intelligence

From single to triple loop learning
EVALUATION IN DEMOCRACY
European Parliament
Accountability as a learning paradigm

Implications for the evaluation function

Implications for Parliament

From external control to democratic oversight to democratic governance