

A European Evaluation Society Event

Evaluation in Democracy

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WHAT IS DEMOCRATIC EVALUATION?

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*Democratic evaluation moves away from
information control toward making evaluations
more open and transparent*

Ernest R. House

Can evaluation help fill the 'democratic deficit' within the European Union?

- Evaluation cannot readily address its structural dimension
- But it can help fill the democratic gap by promoting:
 - Access
 - Transparency
 - Accountability

Yes, but only if evaluators subscribe to democratic values

- Evaluators are not value neutral
- The EES capabilities framework specifies that evaluators should uphold democratic values
http://www.europeanevaluation.org/files/EES_Capabilities_Survey_Evaluation.pdf
- They should promote the social justice, empowerment and equality foundations of the EU project

What is democratic evaluation?

- ***Evaluation in democracy*** : macro positioning of evaluation in society
 - Independent evaluation embedded in governance processes and structures
- ***Democracy in evaluation***: deliberative approaches and methods
 - strengthen accountability, give more voice to citizens and improve policy relevance and programme delivery

Democratic evaluation enhances accountability

Evaluation in representative democracies can help make authority responsible to citizens:

- by ensuring that politicians' promises are compared with what they deliver
- by ascertaining whether observed shortcomings were due to circumstances over which the administration had no control - or whether the risks could have been managed better

Democratic evaluation amplifies citizens' voices

- Evaluation fills the democratic gap from one electoral cycle to the next
- It acts as a two-way feedback mechanism
 - by injecting citizens and civil society groups' views into the policy process
 - by providing citizens with objective information about public sector performance

Democratic evaluation enhances performance

- The traditional output measures and budget coefficients dominate public sector management do not measure results
- They can easily be manipulated.
- Evaluation generates incentives to deliver results

Evaluation independence is an imperative

- Without functional and structural independence evaluation is subservient to the bureaucracy and powerful constituencies
- The Commission should be equipped with self evaluation instruments ...
- ...while independent evaluation should report to the European Parliament and attest to the validity of self evaluation claims

Democracy in evaluation implies autonomy

- A consultant who uses evaluation techniques to help decision makers is fee dependent
- Two options:
 - the evaluator assumes full professional ownership of the evaluation product and reports to citizens' representatives
 - the evaluator acts as facilitator while promoting a level playing field (deliberative democratic evaluation)

In both cases democratic evaluation

- Challenges information monopolies
- Unearths values and interests
- Broadens the questions to be addressed
- Ensures that citizens' views are heard
- Disseminates findings to the public at large
- Ensures joint control over the evaluation process
- Respects the privacy of individuals
- Facilitates principled interaction between evaluators, managers and beneficiaries
- Empowers the disadvantaged

Tackling threats to deliberative democratic evaluation

- Vulnerability to capture and manipulation in highly polarized and conflict ridden contexts
- Alternative approaches:
 - *critical evaluation models*
 - *culturally sensitive evaluation approaches*
 - *participatory evaluation*
 - *empowerment evaluation*

Conclusions

Democratic evaluation should be tailor made to the European space and generate:

- Independence in dispositions, structures and processes
- Respect for a plurality of views
- Endorsement of ethical and democratic values
- Protection of citizens' privacy and right to know
- Citizens' involvement (directly & through their elected representatives)