

Country: [Malaysia](#)

VOPE name: [Malaysian Evaluation Society \(MES\)](#)

Contact Person: [Arunaselam Rasappan, International Liaison/Acting Secretary](#)

Primary e-mail: arasappan@cedre.org.my

Alternate email: arurasappan@gmail.com

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“Institutionalising Evaluation on a Whole-of-Government Basis: Role of an Evaluation Society - Malaysian Evaluation Society”

1.0 Introduction & Background

The idea of forming an evaluation society in Malaysia was first mooted in 1995 by a small group of individuals. The evaluation agenda was embedded in the national medium-term development plans since the 1960s but was largely confined to a few sectors such as health, education, and agriculture. In the later years, the evaluation take-off point arose out of the then ongoing initiative on evaluation through the government's Results Based Management (RBM) system in 1990. Though evaluation was not a new initiative, the detailed focus on it and its integration and mainstreaming into the government's public management modernization agenda was not very prominent prior to 1990. To better understand the history and development of the evaluation agenda in Malaysia, it is useful to have a better understanding of the background to public sector budgeting in Malaysia which formed the entry point for evaluation.

Evaluation in Malaysia goes back to the 1960s when Malaysia introduced the medium term five year development plan. The schema in **Attachment 1** shows the progress and position of evaluation within the national development agenda over the years.

The government of Malaysia had revamped its budgeting and performance management system from the Program Performance Budgeting System (PPBS) (1969) to the Modified Budgeting System (MBS) in 1991. Under the MBS, the government had mandated summative evaluation within the public budgeting system as a key initiative to support its ongoing public sector performance and accountability agenda. Under this requirement, all Ministries had to carry out a summative evaluation of their Programs and Activities¹ at least once in five years. This was to ensure that the Programs and Activities were up to date and valid in terms of focus, execution, and development results. The mandated evaluation was also to ensure that the Programs and Activities were producing the right results and as a form of further focusing and fine-tuning the various intervention programs across government.

Unlike in other developing countries, the evaluation agenda was already in-built into the government development agenda and budgeting system even as far back as 1969 when the government first introduced the PPBS as a development management initiative². This was done at that time due in part to the encouragement given by the World Bank to include evaluation into the development agenda.

The above agenda on evaluation has been a feature in the Malaysian development plans with active evaluations being mandated particularly in the health, educational, and agricultural sectors. With the introduction of the MBS in 1991, the evaluation agenda was given even more bite when it was mandated as part of the results-based management system and public sector accountability agenda across government.

Despite the above, the evaluation agenda was taken as granted and many agencies did not pay serious attention to it except for specific sectors such as health, education, and agriculture. The Ministry of Finance was the key driver for the initiative and with the budget being pegged to the results under the MBS, there was substantial improvement to the evaluation agenda. The evaluation effort under the MBS was spearheaded by the National Institute of Public Administration (or INTAN as it was popularly known) and led by its senior program manager responsible for the MBS and evaluation in government³.

The evaluation agenda in government was revived and further strengthened under the MBS initiative with the active development work and support by INTAN and its senior program manager. With the assistance

¹ The public budgeting system in Malaysia uses a Program-Activity structure where all Ministries are divided into Programs and Activities and budget funding is targeted at the Activity level. Performance planning, monitoring, and reporting are also targeted at the Activity level.

² Prior to 1969, the government was using the traditional line-item incremental budgeting system that was inherited from the British colonial days.

³ Dr. Arunselam Rasappan, senior program manager in INTAN, was responsible for institutionalising and building capacity for the MBS initiative across government. He was also instrumental in reviving and revitalising the evaluation agenda in the Malaysian public sector, which had been a core function in development management since the 1960s. He developed various logic models and approaches to RBM and evaluation in an effort to further improve the adoption and practice of evaluation in government. Among the more popular models he developed which were adopted are the ProLL Model (1994/1995), the Internalised Self-Evaluation (ISE) Model (1999), the Integrated Results-based Management (IRBM) system (1999), and the ProLL Evaluation Planning Tool (1999).

and technical advice of Jerome Winston from RMIT University, Melbourne, Rasappan developed various models and approaches to evaluation, based on public sector requirements. This added much value to the government's agenda on promoting evaluation across whole of government. Among the key initiatives, models/approaches, and actions related to evaluation that were initiated were as follows:

- 1992: Development of the ProLL Model⁴ for exclusive use of the public sector as a logic model for program planning as well as evaluation planning under the MBS initiative;
- 1992-1994: Testing and institutionalization of the ProLL Model for program planning and evaluation in government. All government agencies used ProLL for program planning and later for evaluation planning
- 1995: As part of the evaluation outreach and advocacy strategy, a dedicated international virtual discussion list on government evaluation called "Govteval" was initiated by Arunaselam Rasappan with the assistance and support of Jerome Winston and Patricia Rogers of RMIT University, Australia. The base for this list was in Kuala Lumpur. The list was officially launched at the AEA-CES International Evaluation Conference, Vancouver, Canada. The ProLL Model was also officially shared with the Conference by Rasappan and Winston during the Conference.
- 1995: After the Vancouver Conference, Rasappan brought up the suggestion to form a national evaluation society with the Ministry of Finance as a focused strategy for the promotion and advocacy of evaluation in the Malaysian government. The Ministry of Finance was very supportive as evaluation was still an official agenda under the MBS.
- 1996: Discussions were held with AES on possible collaboration to support the evaluation initiatives in Malaysia and the eventual formation of an evaluation society in Malaysia. A series of discussions were held with the AES, including attendance in the 1996 AES and 1997 AIC Evaluation Conferences all helped to further promote and encourage the formation of a dedicated
- 1997: As the interest in evaluation was still unsatisfactory, Rasappan and Winston decided to organise and run an international conference on evaluation in July 1997. This Conference was intended to raise awareness, appreciation, and buy-in for evaluation across the board in the country and specifically from the public sector. The initiative was supported by the Ministry of Finance and other key government agencies such as INTAN, and MAMPU⁵. As a result of the Conference in 1997, there was heightened interest and focus on evaluation in government and particularly its utility for performance management and program accountability.
- 1998: After the evaluation conference, Rasappan carried out initial advocacy work through the Ministry of Finance to review and formalise the evaluation agenda in government. A small group of evaluation-related individuals was then formed to spearhead the formation of a national evaluation society. The group managed to get the minimum of representatives from seven Provinces/States in Malaysia to form the national society with the minimum of representatives from seven Provinces/States in the country. The group prepared the draft constitution and terms of reference, and other relevant paperwork for registration.
- 1999: The Malaysian Evaluation Society or MES was formally registered with the Registrar of Societies in 1999 with an initial membership of ten members coming from across seven different States in the country. Since its inception, the MES has been working closely with the Ministry of Finance and other key government agencies in the country to advocate and support the development and utilization of evaluation, with particular focus on the public sector.

A unique feature of the MES is that the above efforts were undertaken without any external or donor assistance. The effort was mostly led by a small group of interested individuals with support from a tri-partite collaboration between government, private sector, and academia. There were no other evaluation societies in the region at that time to fall back on. However, the initiative was supported with technical advice by Jerome Winston from the Australasian Evaluation Society (AES).

⁴ ProLL Model is Program Logic and Linkages Model, a logic model used for performance planning and management as well as for M&E. It has been in use in the Malaysian government since 1992.

⁵ MAMPU is the Malaysian Administrative Modernization Planning Unit under the Prime Minister's Department which was spearheading public sector modernization and service delivery improvements and a key transformational entity besides the Ministry of Finance. INTAN is the national training institute for public administration, a key capacity building institution for the Malaysian government.

2.0 MES Board Composition

The MES Board is made up of seven Board members with a President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and three other Board members assigned to specific portfolios such as membership, public sector liaison, and international liaison. The society is also supported by a part-time executive secretary, who is paid a monthly allowance. This setup is adequate to manage the different categories and levels of activities undertaken by the MES. With an expansion of the scope and workload of the MES over the last few years, the hiring of the part-time executive secretary has been most helpful.

3.0 Conceptual Framework for Evaluation in Malaysia

The conceptual framework for evaluation in Malaysia is built on the conviction and principles of *integration* and *sustainability*. The original evaluation agenda in Malaysia under the medium term national development plans was pegged to development projects which needed to be evaluated. Though evaluation was prescribed under the Program Performance Budgeting System (PPBS) introduced in 1969, it was not seriously implemented due to various challenges and implementation weaknesses. However, under the MBS (1990) and subsequently under the ongoing Outcome-Based Budgeting (OBB) system under the Integrated RBM (IRBM) initiative, the evaluation agenda has been integrated as a key factor into the performance planning for the public sector. The evaluation agenda was integrated into both the development plans as well as the budgetary process into a single seamless approach where the focus is on programs and program outcomes with evaluation being mandated as an integral part of public sector performance management and accountability.

This is an important contributing factor for the advocacy and development of the evaluation agenda in the country. This switch in focus and strategic overview of evaluation and the subsequent positioning of evaluation within public sector performance has been mainly due to the collaborative work between the tripartite partnership between the public sector, civil society, and private sector

More recently, when the government adopted the IRBM system with its strong focus on integration, the conceptual approach to evaluation has been brought to new heights with the inclusion of evaluation as an integral component with three specific mandates:

- a. **Mandate #1:** Annual formative evaluations are required for every Ministry and its Programs and Activities. However, the selection of Programs for evaluation is based on a specific set of criteria to ensure that it is practical and manageable. Typically, programs that have high impact, high cost, and serious implications are recommended to be evaluated on a formative basis. This limitation is in recognition of the capacity constraints rather than the need itself. It was a temporary measure until adequate internal capacity is built within every public sector entity through the Internalised Self-Evaluation (ISE) approach.
- b. **Mandate #2:** The *Internalised Self-Evaluation* (ISE) model has been approved to be adopted at every Ministry, where every Activity and Program is encouraged to carry out its own internal evaluation as a key strategy for improving performance planning and development results.
- c. **Mandate #3:** The budgetary process is also pegged to the evaluation function. All government agencies are required to conduct evaluations for their programs and to use the evaluations to support any proposal for policy or program adjustments.

Conceptually, evaluation is now factored into the performance planning and management agenda as an integral component rather than an end process. This has major implications for evaluation as it is now factored into the performance management agenda taking into account all key dimensions. ECD in Malaysia is thus guided and driven by this integrated multi-dimensional approach rather than a purely training-based ECD conceptual approach. Under this approach, government recognizes that focusing on evaluation in itself or building capacity purely based on training and technical skills alone cannot be successful or sustainable.

The new conceptual approach was designed and developed with the close collaboration between the tri-partite partnership between the Ministry of Finance, MES, and the Center for Development & Research in Evaluation (CeDRE) International. The former provided the right policy environment and support, while MES provided the evaluation institutional and technical support, and CeDRE provided the technical design, development, testing, and capacity building support for many of the tools and techniques used for evaluation promotion in the Malaysian public sector. In particular, the partnership

was very fruitful and basically resulted in many new approaches and models to evaluation that the public sector would otherwise have perhaps taken years to accomplish.

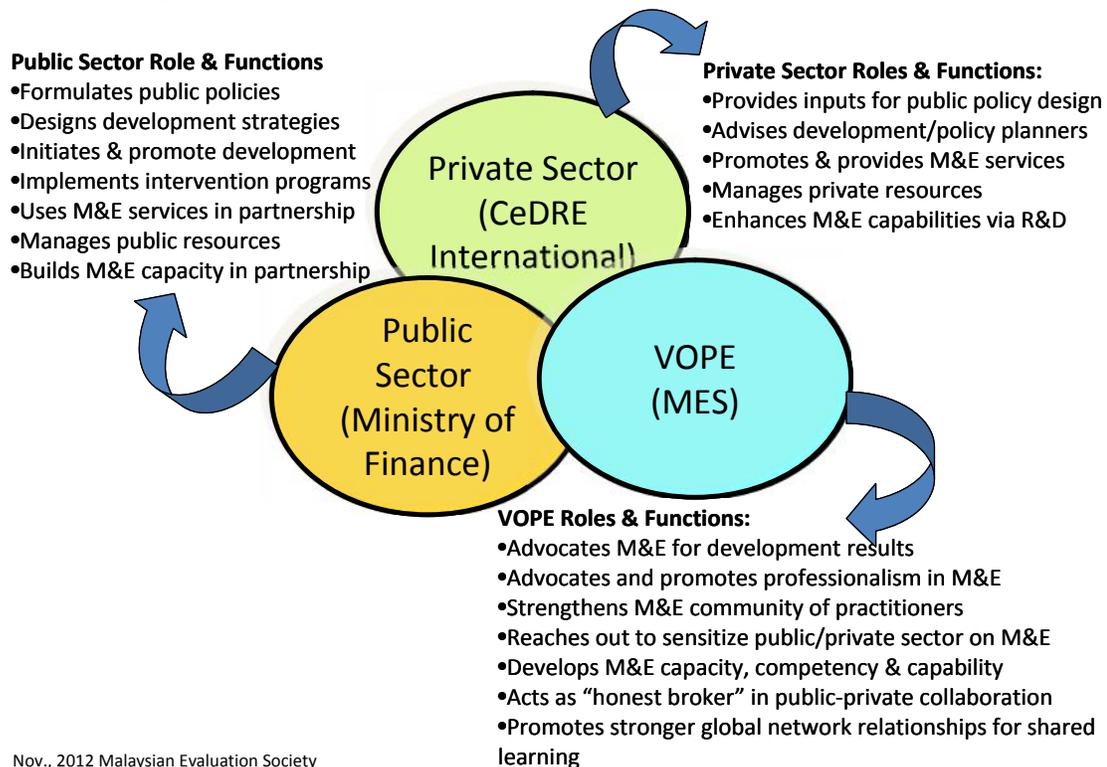
Joint Forums: Another good example of the productive partnership, particularly for influencing policy, were the public forums jointly organized by the MoF, MES, and CeDRE which brought evaluation experiences and international examples to public officials.

Bi-annual International Evaluation Conferences: The tripartite partnership has also seen substantive exposure and capacity building for the public sector as well as other sectors through the MES bi-annual international evaluation conferences. This is again a collaborative effort between the three partners and has helped promote evaluation in not only the public sector but also the private sector and civil society. The MES is also proud to note that much of the promotion and advancement of the evaluation agenda in government was an outcome of the close collaboration between the tripartite partnership. The regular MES conferences, which are very current, contextual and experiential, have helped bring about substantial exposure, awareness, appreciation, and buy-in from both the policy side as well as technical side within public sector agencies.

A schema of this tri-partite collaboration is shown in **Figure 1** below.

Figure 1: Integrated Model for M&E Collaboration

An Integrated Model for M&E Collaboration



4.0 Strengthening the Enabling Environment

The approach to ECD in Malaysia has undergone a major change in strategy, direction, approach, scope, and fundamental premises upon which the evaluation agenda has been formulated and driven since the 1990s. This switch in the conceptual and strategic approach to evaluation is due to a large extent to the advocacy and development work of the MES as a key partner in the tri-partite partnership between the public sector, private sector, and civil society. Under this approach, the evaluation agenda has been revised to integrate it with the budgetary process as compared to the development plan previously.

Though the MES cannot claim to have single-handedly brought about the changes to the evaluation environment, it nevertheless had an active contribution towards the enabling environment through the

tri-partite collaboration. As explained earlier, this had contributed to substantial developments in the public sector evaluation field since the early 1990s.

5.0 Strengthening Evaluation Capacity

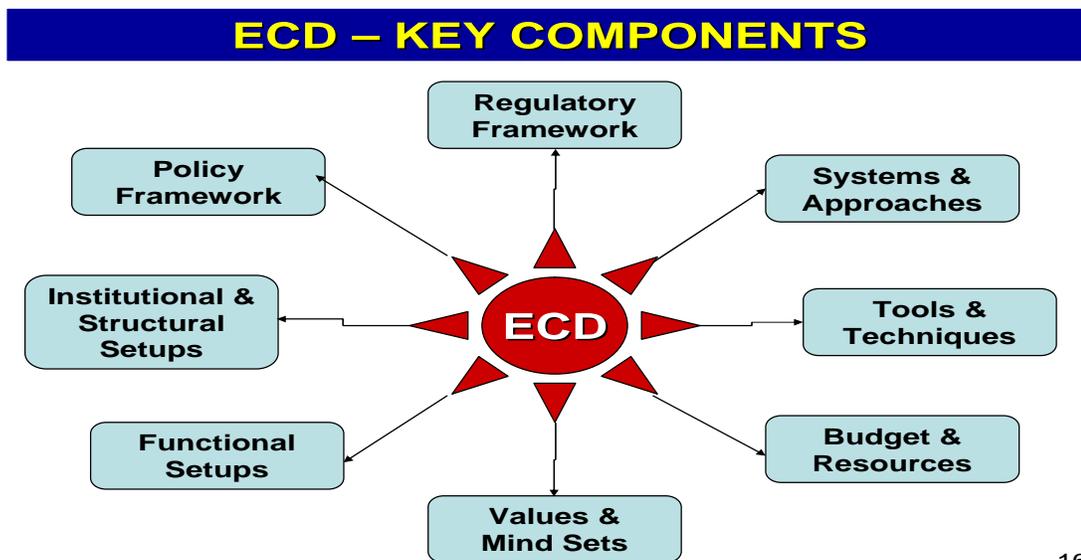
Over the years since 1991, the work of key individuals within government and since the late 1990s through the combined efforts of the MES, Ministry of Finance, and CeDRE International, substantive capacity building efforts have been undertaken across the public sector. The ECD agenda in public sector has been strongly influenced by the advocacy work by the tri-partite collaboration. CeDRE, through its principals, introduced several new approaches to evaluation for the public sector. The tri-partite partnership was strongly influenced by the conviction that ECD cannot be driven by evaluation training alone unless it was grounded in an integrated and holistic evaluation environment that took into account all critical dimensions that contribute to an internalized and sustainable evaluation agenda across the public sector.

Towards this end, the Ministry of Finance with the technical advice and support of CeDRE, developed and adopted a conceptual framework for evaluation that led to an integrated approach to ECD in government. The basic dimensions identified and which were addressed in the evaluation agenda are:

- a. Policy environment and framework
- b. Regulatory framework
- c. Institutional and structural setups
- d. Systems & approaches
- e. Functional setups
- f. Tools and Techniques
- g. Budget and resources
- h. Values and Mind Sets

A schema of this multi-dimensional model utilized in Malaysia is as shown in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Multi-Dimensional ECD Model Malaysia



Sept., 2011 A. Rasappan & J. Winston, CeDRE International

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Having taken the multi-dimensional approach above as the basic ECD building block, the tri-partite collaboration and especially the Ministry of Finance and CeDRE were instrumental in designing and implementing focused and purposive capacity building for both the policy level and the technical and operational level.

A special feature of this was the Training-of-Trainers (ToT) program where about forty key mid-level officials from across six Ministries were put through an intensive four-stage capacity building project. This was done in collaboration with the RMIT University, Australia. CeDRE designed the capacity

building effort in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance and RMIT for a Graduate Certificate Program. The first batch of thirty eight officials who successfully completed this program are now acting as key movers and shakers of evaluation in the Malaysian public sector.

This group of thirty eight key evaluation facilitators and the follow-up advocacy and promotion programs by the tri-partite partnership above have been key to pushing the evaluation agenda in government, including the introduction of the ISE model and formative evaluation requirements in the public sector.

Whole-of-Government Capacity Building: Since 2009, the evaluation agenda has been further promoted and integrated into the main performance management agenda of government through both the medium term development plan and through the integrated budgetary approach. In 2009, the government adopted the Integrated Results Based Management (IRBM) system commencing with the 10th Malaysia Plan 2011-2015. This system, which has a strong evaluation agenda, was then also adopted by the Ministry of Finance through its outcome-based budgeting approach. Under the OBB system, so far about two hundred over middle to senior level key officials from across government have been trained in IRBM and the OBB system. Monitoring and evaluation is again a key ingredient in the OBB system under the IRBM initiative in government.

Here again, the capacity building focus has been holistic instead of merely training officials. The same dimensions outlined above were strongly factored into the OBB system implementation with evaluation being accorded a strong integrative role for public sector performance management. Individual capacities in evaluation and related areas are only one of many key contributing factors in public sector management and within the ECD agenda in Malaysia. The OBB approach under the IRBM system has made it a point to address each of the dimensions mentioned above using a systems approach to ECD.

6.0 Strengthening Equity-Focused & Gender Issues

Malaysia being a multi-racial, multi-religion, and multi-cultural country has always been sensitive to and systematically addressed issues that touch on them. The Malaysian public sector has for many years strongly integrated equity, gender, marginalization, and cultural issues into the mainstream public management initiatives. There are definitive policies and procedures that govern these issue areas. The Ministry of Finance and the tri-partite partnership with MES and CeDRE did not have to spend much time and energy with these issue areas as they were already being addressed through public policy in place over the years. However, equity, gender, and cultural sensitivity issues are part of the IRBM system requirements for cross-cutting issues that have been introduced in government since 2009.

Under this system, gender, equity, and balance growth have been classified as part of about twelve cross-cutting issues that all Ministries and government agencies must address within their strategic performance plans with specific key performance indicators to be put into place to cover them.

7.0 Strengthening of MES Institutional Capacity

Over the years since it first started functioning, the MES has been faced with various challenges and constraints both in terms of its own institutional capacity as well as technical aspects. Some of these challenges are still prevalent till today, especially the issue of membership and active participation, and revenue stream.

However, the MES has steadfastly stuck to the principal that strength, presence, and active involvement and contribution to the evaluation field does not necessarily have to come from quantity but more so from focused and quality work. In this sense, though the MES is small, the group is highly interested and dedicated to evaluation work and this has made a big difference compared to other VOPEs with large membership but limited activities and even less impact in the field of evaluation.

8.0 Bottlenecks & Challenges

The three main challenges faced by the MES since its inception could be identified as follows:

- a. Limited time from existing members to devote to the intensive advocacy and developmental work in evaluation, especially with the public sector;
- b. Limited capacity to cope with the large demand for evaluation and related work in the public sector, which interestingly was created by the MES itself in partnership with other key public and private sector institutions;
- c. Expanding the membership with quality and active membership.

9.0 Strengthening Evaluation Capacity

Despite the challenges above, the MES has made remarkable progress over the years and this has to be attributed to the dedication and hard work of a few individuals who not only created new approaches and models for evaluation but also worked closely with the Ministry of Finance to strategically experiment and implement them in a systematic and policy-driven environment. The key to the success is also attributed to the strong tri-partite win-win collaboration between the MES, the Ministry of Finance, and CeDRE International.

10.0 Key Enabling Factors

The key enabling factors are:

- a. Close and highly developmental partnerships between public sector, private sector, and MES;
- b. innovation and value addition to the evaluation agenda in/for the public sector;
- c. integrated systems approach to evaluation with strong policy link.

11.0 Innovations and Lessons Learned

The MES experience and roadmap in Malaysia may not necessarily be applicable to all countries as there are large differences in the socio-economic and political backgrounds. However, there are lessons to be learned through the Malaysian experience. Malaysia is lucky to have evaluation as an agenda in the government's development plans. But then, many other countries also have evaluation mentioned in their development plans as an important component. The key determining factors are the approach to the evaluation agenda, developing and pushing agendas that fit into the government agenda, demonstrating utility and usefulness, and most of all the dynamic partnerships.

It is not easy to gain the confidence of the government on the private sector and civil society entities. Even in Malaysia, it took some years before the government recognized the role and contribution of the MES and CeDRE. This only happened due to a number of key factors:

- a. the presence of a basic evaluation agenda in government giving it official recognition and "legitimacy" to be recognized by government;
- b. ongoing advocacy program that helps to convince government on the true utility and strategic role of evaluation to support government policies and programs;
- c. the strategic identification and participation of evaluation champions both within and outside government;
- d. producing convincing evidence of the utility and usefulness of evaluation in public management through continuous exposure and confidence building;
- e. exposure and involvement of top management and leaders in public management strategic programs that include and help showcase the usefulness of evaluation;
- f. strategic introduction of a medium to longer-term *osmosis* approach to evaluation appreciation and agenda approval by policy levels;
- g. a holistic and integrated approach to evaluation capacity building that is also convincing to both internal policy makers and external stakeholders.

12.0 Next Steps and Strategic Directions

The MES has come a long way since its inception years. It has, in close collaboration with the public sector and private sector, made major inroads into ECD using the multi-dimensional and integrated

approach to ECD. There is still a lot of work to be done with ECD and especially which is linked to public policy and public sector performance management.

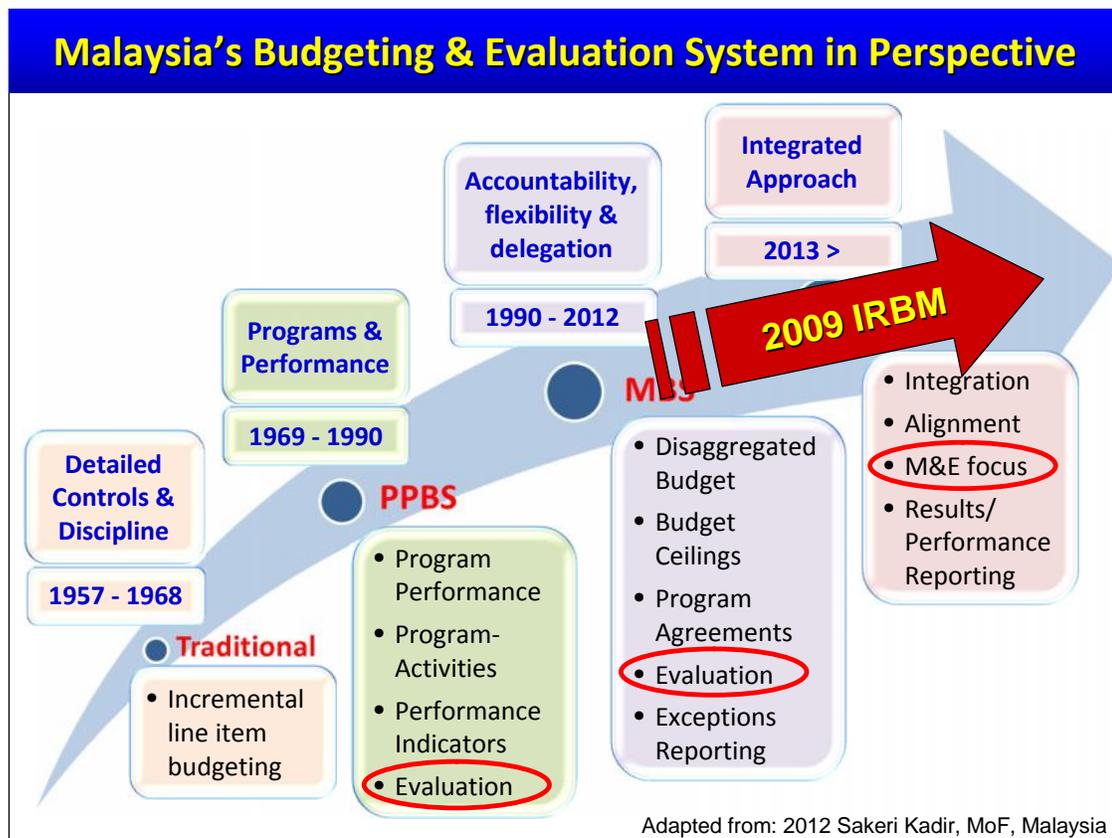
The MES will continue to work closely through the collaborative partnership to focus more on long-term sustainable capacity building on all dimensions of ECD. There are a few key outcomes that the MES hopes to achieve in the near future, as follows:

- a. Making evaluation a mandatory budget item in the annual budget across not only the public sector but also all other sectors;
- b. Building and strengthening long-term foundations for evaluation wherein evaluation becomes one of the core subject in institutions of higher learning;
- c. Recognition and integration of evaluation into public policy and management models across government as a core ingredient;
- d. Supporting government specifically and the evaluation field in general with practical and cutting-edge approaches, methods, and tools;
- e. Carrying out more support work for the eventual professionalization of the evaluation field;
- f. Supporting other VoPEs towards helping to advance the cause of evaluation in their respective countries;
- g. Improving its membership base to become more representative of the various sectors and to strengthen its own representativeness in the evaluation field;
- h. Forming strategic partnerships with other key players in the public management field within and outside the country that would further strengthen the evaluation advocacy and utilization work.

Given its history and development track record, the MES is confident that it would be able to play a more meaningful role in the field of evaluation both in Malaysia as well as internationally.

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Attachment 2: Multi-Dimensional Integrated ECD Matrix

ECD – INTEGRATED APPROACH MATRIX										
	Environmental Factors							Personal Factors		
Critical Success Factors Levels/ Categories	Top Level Buy-In, Commitment & Leadership	Policy & Regulatory Framework	Systems & Approaches	Tools & Techniques	Budget & Resources	Functional Setups	Institutional & Structural Setups	Values & Mind Sets	Knowledge, Skills, Competencies	Incentives/ Motivation
Global*										
National										
Sector*										
Organization										
Group										
Individual										

* **Key:** **Global** = External global factors that affect/influence ECD in the country; **Sector:** Refers to a generic functional classification e.g. agriculture

Sept., 2011 A. Rasappan & J. Winston, CeDRE International