



**3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference  
on Public Policy (ICPP3)**

**June 28-30, 2017 – Singapore**

**Panel T07P14 Session 1**

*Policy Evaluation in Performance Regimes:  
A Comparative Perspective*

**Title of the paper**

*Roles of Third Party Entities in Enhancing Participatory Approach  
and Capacity Building of Policy Evaluation in Malaysia*

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**Date of presentation**

*Friday, 30<sup>th</sup> June 2017, 10.30 to 12.30*

# **Roles of Third Party Entities in Enhancing Participatory Approach and Capacity Building of Policy Evaluation in Malaysia**

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## **Abstract:**

*Policy evaluation is fundamental to any public policy management due to the rising concern of public on 'what works' about policies and programs. Recent trend witnesses the rising roles of third party entities in policy and program evaluation. The non-governmental entities such as community groups, media, non-profit organization, research and academic institutions, and international organizations begin to take roles in evaluation activities. The paper seeks to examine the extent of policy and program evaluation is enhanced by participation of third party entities. Does it help to create an enabling environment that facilitates effective policy and program evaluation? The paper is written mainly based on secondary sources of information, and uses a combination of descriptive and analytical methods. The paper contributes to additional information on the roles of third party entities in policy evaluation in Malaysia. Future studies may look deeper into how these entities encourage independent evaluation and help to build a reliable evaluation system.*

**Keywords:** *Third party entities, policy evaluation, participatory evaluation, and evaluation capacity building.*

## **Introduction**

Governments all over the world are grappling with increasing internal and external demands for reforms and improvement in public management. The pressure of global economy, the rise of new information and technology, and the increase demands on accountability and transparency have called for greater participation and democracy in the way government organizations manage its businesses. These demands may come from various sources including development institutions, donors, private sectors, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), citizen's groups, civil societies, media and so forth. This is where government performance has become a global phenomenon and called for powerful public management tool such as results-based monitoring and evaluation (M&E). M&E helps policy-makers and decision-makers to track progress and identify the real outcomes and impacts of given programs and policies.

Conventionally, most of evaluation activities are led by government institutions in efforts to ensure accountability and transparency in policies and programs implementation are upheld. This serves the instrumental role of evaluation, which is primarily to become a management tool for accountability, learning, improvement and decision making purposes. However, living in an increasingly multicultural and diversified world triggers the need to design evaluations that are culturally responsive to community and inclusive of relevant program stakeholders (Chouinard, 2013). Consequently, a more broader and diversified interest on evaluation that includes the community of evaluation stakeholders who are mainly practitioners, academicians, researchers, evaluation society, civil society organizations, media, international organizations, and etc emerged. The variety of profiles background who involve in evaluation activities on policies and programs that affect them stimulates the participatory approach in the evaluation cycle.

As the term suggests, participatory evaluation involves a process of integrating participation and partnership among policy actors; program evaluators and stakeholders. Participatory approaches to evaluation are designed to address diverse programs and organizational needs across a broad range of local, program, and cultural contexts with varied rationales that include local ownership, empowerment, use of findings, organizational and individual learning, and program improvement (Cousins & Chouinard, 2012). Therefore, it generally concerns on the level of stakeholder involvement, the diversity among stakeholders, and the level of evaluator control over the process. The motivation for adopting a participatory approach can be distinguished based on the rationale and goals of evaluation as well as the needs and requirements of the program and community context (Chouinard, 2013). The approach claims the commitment and valuable time of many parties, yet may provide far-reaching benefits.

The rise of participatory approach in evaluation activities is also fueled by the shortage of evaluation capacity. As the demand for evaluation grows faster than the ability to supply evaluation, it also prompts the need to include various entities including stakeholders in the evaluation process. The present paper seeks to discuss the nature of participatory approach in public policy and program in Malaysia and comments on their roles in creating an enabling environment for evaluation activities. It begins with a brief note on the participatory evaluation seeking to identify its key features and purposes. Next section highlights about some examples of citizen participation in several countries. This is followed by an overview of policy and program evaluation in Malaysia. Later the identification of the key participants and partnerships in policy and program evaluation is highlighted with some discussion and findings.

## **Participatory Evaluation**

Participatory evaluation offers dissimilarity to the conventional approach of evaluation. It concentrates on the engagement of participants in the evaluation process, rather than offers any new specific set of methods or techniques of evaluation. The issue in participatory evaluation is not about which methods to use but whose voices to include, how to include them, and determining who will speak for whom (Chouinard, 2013; Greene, 2000). The decisions on method choice do not come from any a priori philosophical or methodological preference but rather from participants themselves and the program exigencies, and community context (Hall, 1992; Carman, 2013). Participatory evaluation brings various groups of participants together into the evaluation platform. It is regarded as a collaboration among researchers, facilitators, or professional evaluators with individuals, groups, or communities who have a decided stake in the program, development project, or other entity being evaluated (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998).

While Cousins & Earl, (1995) defined participatory evaluation as “an applied social research that involves a partnership between trained evaluation personnel and practices-based decision makers, organization members with program responsibility or people with a vital interest in the program”. On the other hand, Institute of Development Studies (1998) regarded participatory monitoring and evaluation as ‘not just a matter of using participatory techniques within a conventional monitoring and evaluation setting but also to radically rethink who initiates and undertakes the process, and who learns or benefits from the findings’. The promise of collaboration between communities and governments is that it promotes and reinforces an ongoing ‘virtuous cycle of contact, fosters community organization and attitudes of responsibility and strategic thinking (Canaye, 1999). In differentiating the conventional and

participatory evaluation, Diez (2001) has highlighted the differences between both as the following:

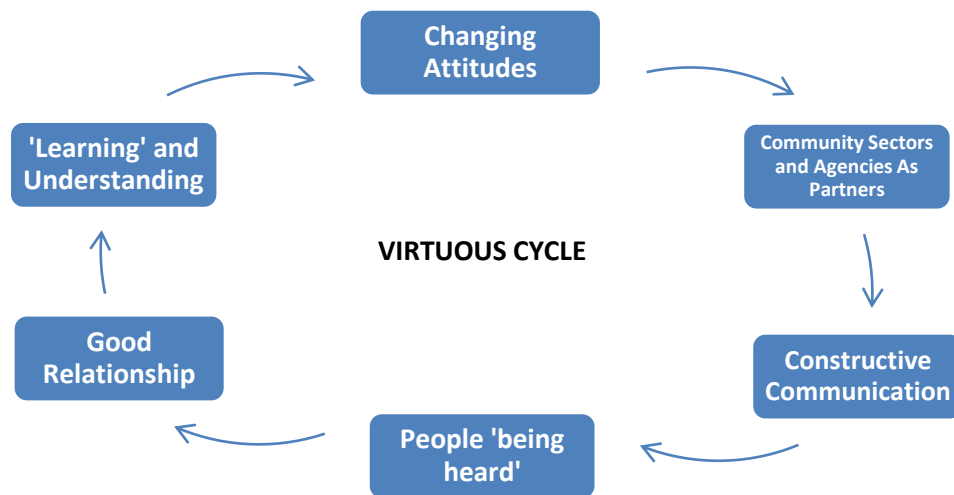
**Table 2:  
Differences Between Participatory and Conventional Evaluation**

Questions	Conventional	Participatory
Who?	External experts	Beneficiary, business people, policy-makers, evaluation team
What?	Success criteria and information necessities are pre-determined	Participants identify their own information necessities and determine their own success criteria
How?	Distance from the evaluation team and other participants	Shared methods and results from the involvement of participants
When?	In general, when the policy or program is finished	Frequently, throughout the duration of the policy. Continuous evaluation.
Why?	Summative evaluation. Should the policy or program be continued.	Formative evaluation to generate actions of improvement. Continual learning.

*Source: Diez (2001)*

The rationale and motivation for adopting a participatory approach can be further distinguished based on the rationale and goals of the evaluation as well as the needs and requirements of the program and community context (Chouinard, 2013). However, participatory approaches to evaluation and evaluation capacity development (ECD), such as those used in AC4SC, require greater planning and higher levels of participation and engagement than other evaluation approaches (Diaz-Puente, Yague, & Afonso, 2008). Participatory evaluation is likely to satisfy the need for responsiveness in evaluation while maintaining sufficient technical rigor so as to satisfy the probable local critics. Cavaye (1999) has highlighted the collaboration process between communities and government through virtuous cycle of contact between the two as in the Figure 1 below. It starts with ‘learning’ and ‘understanding’ process which later leads to changing attitude. Community sectors and agencies will then act as partners with constructive communication, where people being heard ended with good relationship between both parties.

**Figure 1:**  
**Virtuous cycle of contact between communities and public agencies (Cavaye, 1999:9 as quoted by Cuthill & Fien, 2005)**



*Source: Cavaye, 1999:9*

Participatory evaluation is a partnership approach to evaluation in which stakeholders actively engage in developing the evaluation and all phases of its implementation. Those who play active roles are normally have the most stakes in the program such as partners, program beneficiaries, funders, and key decision makers. Thus, participatory evaluation is centred on institutions and on people. The stakeholders in a particular policy become the principal actors in the process of evaluation, rather than merely the objects of evaluation. This approach provides opportunity for policy stakeholders and the evaluation team to analyse problems, restrictions and obstacles together has potential to lead to new solutions that emerge from the exchange of ideas and perspectives (Aragon, Aranguren, Diez, Iturrioz, & Wilson, 2014).

Cousins & Whitmore (1998) as quoted by Taylor (2005), drawing on early work by Foote Whyte have distinguished between two different approaches to contemporary participatory evaluation: what they call as ‘practical participatory evaluation’ and ‘transformative participatory evaluation’. Both approaches stress the central role of participant knowledge in

evaluation, but transformative participatory evaluation has an explicitly political aim, which is to enhance participants' understanding of the 'connections among knowledge, power and control'. Cousins and Whitmore talk about the problem of stakeholder diversity and depth of participation. The logic of participation inevitably throws up a diversity of stakeholder interests and there is a danger that this can lead to a relativistic stalemate, where each stakeholder's view is seen as equally plausible. However, if stakeholders are understood as positioned in wider power relations, there is the possibility of employing elements of the 'realist' approach and a more conflict-oriented perspective.

Participation also plays a central role in contemporary discourses around new forms of community-based governance. There is an alignment here between a governance strategy based on consultation and community development, and participatory forms of evaluation seeking to develop community learning and empowerment. This conjuncture may provide a space to pursue radical approaches to evaluation. Hanberger (2001) highlights that people's participation is the most important quality of a democracy. According to this view, the power of the people is exercised when they participate. Accordingly, apathy and non-participation are seen as the major threats to democracy. Moreover, participation is assumed to foster democratic citizens. Applying participation to the context of public policy, citizens are encouraged to participate in the policy process before a policy is decided or launched, and thus primarily in the planning process (Renn, O., Webler, T., Rakel, H., Dienel, P., & Johnson, 1993).



## **Purposes of Participatory Evaluation**

The participatory evaluation is being used for different purposes in different sectors around the globe. The results of participatory evaluation are primarily used in the impact assessment and project planning and management. Impact assessment concerns on the comparison between program objectives and actual achievement. Assessing project impacts can help distinguish whether or not (a) program interventions are in fact achieving their intended objectives, (b) program objectives remain relevant over time, and (c) best action strategies have been pursued (Estrella & Gaventa, 1997).

Another main purpose of participatory evaluation is to provide stakeholders and program managers with information to assess whether project objectives have been met and how resources have been used, in order to improve program implementation and make critical decisions about project funding. This is illustrated in Gujarat, India, where participatory monitoring and evaluation was used to aid village communities in decision making for improved planning and management of a watershed program (Estrella & Gaventa, 1997).

Creating a learning process to strengthen organizational and institutional learning is another major function of participatory evaluation. The process of participatory evaluation may also be used as a process, which allows different stakeholders to articulate and present their needs, interests, and expectations. And finally, participatory evaluation has been used by donor and government agencies to hold beneficiaries and program recipients accountable to agreed goals and performance targets. Building partnerships between major stakeholders would allow reciprocal evaluation to take place, where the donors themselves are subject to some form of accountability. It becomes a two-way exchange relationship.

## **Participatory Evaluation: Examples of Citizen Participation in the Policy Processes**

When discussing on policy and program evaluation in the public sector context, it normally involves government evaluators who do self-evaluation activities for respective organizations and the ones who do evaluation cross-agencies. This group of evaluators consists of government-appointed officers who have been trained for evaluation works. As countries all over the world grow and develop, there has been an increased pressure on the government to include evaluation experts other than government evaluators. Realizing the importance of program evaluation to be performed separately by both evaluation experts and citizens, Caputo (1973) advocates the need to include citizens in the evaluation process. He further refers evaluation experts as academics, private consultants, and public officials who might have professional expertise in the evaluation field while citizens refer to government leaders and citizens at large. While Kim (2008) regards citizens as people other than government evaluators whom may be evaluation experts in academia and research institutes and/ or ordinary people.

In many countries especially the developed and developing ones have witnessed an advocacy of citizen participation in the policy processes in variety of forms. However, the focus has been more on participation in policy making and/ or policy implementation processes (Curtain, 2003). This is in line with what has been highlighted by Diez (2001) when differentiating between the conventional dan participatory evaluation. Participatory evaluation is done continuously throughout the duration of the policy where it focuses on the formative evaluation aims to generate actions of improvement. In contrast to the conventional evaluation which is normally done when the policy or program is finished where the focus is on summative evaluation whether the policy or program should be improved, continued or stopped.

Citizen participation in the policy processes has been advocated in many countries since many years. In Korea for example, the need for citizen participation in policy and program evaluation has been advocated by some academics since the mid-1980s, but it was not until 1998 that meaningful citizen participation was realized. The participation was rather in passive ways where academics and researchers acted as advisors (Kim, 2008). However, the current practice shows citizens play a major role in evaluating policies in the capacity of primary evaluators or respondents to survey assessing satisfaction with policies and programs and with administrative services.

On the other hand, early work in Britain, which acknowledged the political dimensions of evaluation, drew on work in the USA with its strong theoretical commitment to pluralism. MacDonald (1974) in developing evaluation studies in education, was one of first in Britain to propose the notion of democratic evaluation. This approach aims to democratise knowledge based on a 'right to know' for all stakeholders. Awareness of educational performance is seen as a citizen right, with the evaluator providing an information service to the community.

There has been an increasing number of civil society organizations (CSOs) engage in government monitoring and evaluation (M&E) activities on policies and programs (Gildemyn, 2014). CSOs were in a better position to monitor government programs and policies at the decentralised level because of their proximity to the grassroots (Jenkins, 2001). In this paper, the term 'third party entities' is used to represent institutions or people other than government evaluators. The entities other than government institutions such as media, evaluation societies, research and academic institutions and general public have become the third parties in evaluation who share stakes and interests on the achievement of policies and programs.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **An Overview of Policy and Program Evaluation in the Malaysian Public Sector**

Over times, the Malaysian government has consistently made commitment to improve its overall evaluation system. Series of reform initiatives, which include streamlining monitoring and evaluation (M&E) activities were introduced to ensure review and evaluation activities are done at policy and program levels. At the early stage of its implementation, the focus was more on describing policy and program inputs, activities, time, cost, and outputs. This is where the process-focused approach is given more attention rather than the final results and real outcomes of policies and programs. Generally, a system that requires an annual formative evaluation on ministries' programs and activities is in place (Hashim, Ahmad, & Isa, 2017). Although the focus is not so much on the results and outcomes rather than process quality, this performance orientation has created elements of performance culture and institutional eco-system for performance management in the Malaysian public service.

After independence, efforts were intensified and various reform initiatives were introduced to improve the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) activities. The post-independence development plan has witnessed evaluation activities had been further accelerated. Although Malaysia is considered as having a semi-formalized national evaluation policy, it is still considered as a well-established system (*Insights on National Evaluation Capacities in 43 Countries*, 2015). Attempts to measure effectiveness and efficiency of policies and programs have started since early years of post-independence era, but it is not until early 1980s that serious efforts were made by the Malaysian government administration to address effectiveness issues when evaluating government policies and programs. Evaluations slowly began to be incorporated into planning processes and budgetary processes.

In 2005, the government has directed all federal-state level ministries and agencies to undertake outcome evaluations of their programs and projects (Ahmad, 2011). Pursuing this directive, the Implementation Coordination Unit (ICU) of the Prime Minister's Department has released the 'Guidelines in Conducting Development Program Evaluation'. Besides encouraging ministries to conduct internalized self-evaluations, evaluation activities serve as supportive information for any proposal for policies and programs adjustments. In 2009, the government adopted an outcome-based approach for planning, resource allocation, monitoring and evaluation as part of the 10<sup>th</sup> Malaysia Plan 2011 – 2015 (Government of Malaysia Economic Planning Unit, 2010). Through this, evaluations are gradually integrated into planning, budgetary, implementation, and monitoring processes in order to optimize resource allocation (Hashim et al., 2017). The integration of outcome-based approach is then extended in the 11<sup>th</sup> Malaysia Plan 2016 – 2020 as a useful method in measuring results.

The current development on national evaluation policy and practice shows that Malaysia has been categorized under the 'formalized' and 'evolving' categories (*Insights on National Evaluation Capacities in 43 Countries*, 2015). Continuous efforts have been introduced aims at improving the evaluation implementation in government agencies. In succeeding evaluation agenda at various levels including at the national, ministerial, organizational, works teams and individual, requires the aspect of evaluation capacities to be developed. One of the most critical capacities is the institutional capacity. This includes having a sufficient number of relevant institutions such as government agencies, academic institutions, and civil society organizations, etc to support evaluation activities, resource, and share evaluation data, evolve and develop as evaluation field advances, and run evaluation research (Lucks, n.d.). Inter linkages among these institutions are very important to ensure evaluation effectiveness.

## **Key Participants and Partnerships in Evaluation: Do They Stimulate Participatory Approach and Enhance Capacity Building?**

Since independence, Malaysia has built quite a complex public sector performance ecosystem that comprises of various institutions and processes. Malaysia has a semi-formalised but well-established national evaluation policy (Rosenstein, 2015) where the evaluation institutional set up is predominantly led by the government institutions. A focus on results is embedded in all economic development planning, budgeting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation activities.

Generally, there are five (5) recent key national-level performance frameworks that drive performance in the Malaysian public sector. These include: (i) the five year national development plans developed by the Economic Planning Unit (EPU); (ii) the National Transformation Program (NTP) driven by the Performance Management and Delivery Unit (PEMANDU); (iii) the Outcome Based Budgeting (OBB) framework by Ministry of Finance (MOF); (iv) the project monitoring system (SPP II) managed by the Implementation Coordination Unit (ICU); and (v) the Public Sector Transformation Framework by the Public Service Department (PSD). The institutional ecosystem that fosters public sector performance is therefore clustered around the centre of government in Malaysia (*Driving Performance from the Center: Malaysia's Experience with PEMANDU*, 2017).

For the evaluation activities being practised by the private sector organisations particularly those having a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) function, there is a dearth of information to shed light on the state of affairs. As the Government Administrative Circulars only govern evaluations in the public sector, it is not applicable to the private sector as well as the civil society organisations. It can be generally said that civil society organisations are

more involved in the evaluation of funded programs and projects as these evaluation exercises are mostly donor-driven (MyFEPS Drafting Team, 2016). Sanger (2008) highlights the weakness of the current practice of performance measurement development in Malaysia, which does not include participation of civil societies, making it failed to serve public's interests who are the main recipient of the system. Over times, the practice has been improved through various combination of entity participation and partnership in public policy and program cycle.

### ***Evaluation Key Administering Agencies in the Public Sector***

There are several key administering agencies responsible for planning, monitoring, and evaluating national policies and programs in the public sector. These agencies include the Economic Planning Unit (EPU), the Implementation Coordination Unit (ICU), the Malaysian Administrative Modernization and Management Planning Unit (MAMPU), the Ministry of Finance (MOF), and the Public Service Department (PSD) (*Insights on National Evaluation Capacities in 43 Countries*, 2015; Majid & Ahmad, 2013). In addition to these agencies, the National Audit Department (NAD) also become a strategic alliance to evaluate ministries' performance on accountability. The establishment of various administering agencies has stimulated evaluation to become part of government activities. However, the current practice shows either vague or absent national evaluation framework led by one single agency that encompasses various businesses. Every agency seems to operate in a fragmented framework designed to cater respective core businesses (Hashim et al., 2017).

At the ministry level, the evaluation function is further streamlined through related divisions or units specifically dealing with ministries' policies and programs. EPU is regarded as the country's economic planner and responsible in monitoring national policies, initiatives,

programs, and projects. ICU on the other hand, is a government department responsible in coordinating, monitoring, and evaluating the National Development Plan that concentrates on physical development projects. MAMPU is another agency responsible in monitoring, inspectorate, and compliance through Star Rating mechanism that measures and rates the performance of public sector. Next, PSD is responsible to carry out monitoring and evaluation function on the human capital development plan. And finally, MOF is responsible on the fiscal and monetary policies in ensuring efficient distribution of financial resources. Each administering agency works together in succeeding evaluation activities.

***Fostering Third Party Entities Involvement in Evaluation: Roles of Academic and Research Institutions, The Malaysian Evaluation Society (MES), and Media***

Complementing the key roles of these central agencies, academic and research institutes also participate in evaluation activities in Malaysia. In many cases, the academic institutions are often engaged to run action research on policies and programs in collaboration with public sector agencies. Continuous grant allocation for research works and involvement of the National Council of Professors (*Majlis Professor Negara* - MPN) is another example how academics involve in the policy cycle. The MPN is established on the 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2010 where it gathers academic expertise from various fields in order to contribute towards Malaysia's development and progress. The MPN's main objective to provide inputs in terms of academic and professional expertise in various fields, for the use of public advocacy specifically in strengthening the basic of national policy formulation and implementation of the planned program. The MPN serves three main functions; 1) to assist in developing scholarly activities, 2) to assist in policy making, and 3) social advocacy. Engagement series with these institutions helps to succeed the participatory approach in the policy framework. The collaboration between academic and government institutions in research works lead ways for continuous improvement on policies and programs.



On the other hand, the Malaysian Evaluation Society (MES) has been playing an active role in shaping the conceptual and strategic approach to evaluation in the country through key partnerships with the Ministry of Finance and CeDRE International (a private sector group) (IOCE, 2012). The MES is the principal body and means for individuals or organizations involved in evaluation to explore, discuss, develop, and promote all activities and efforts in the field of evaluation. The MES carries out various activities related to evaluation research training and development to help promote evaluation activities. This organization works closely with both local and international bodies and plays an active role in the evaluation advocacy and capacity-building initiatives in Malaysia.

Along with the global advocacy wave of evaluation for sustainable development, the MES worries that Malaysia would be left behind in the development race due to the absence of evaluation culture among the Malaysian organisations. In response to this, the MES initiated the drafting of the Malaysian Framework on Evaluation Policy and Standards (MyFEPS) as a key component of national evaluation capacity development to strengthen an enabling evaluation environment for sustainable growth and development. MyFEPS provides a common framework to enable the Malaysia organizations to commission, manage, conduct, and use evaluation in support of good governance, accountability, and evidence-based decision-making. It also aims to enable Malaysia-based training institutions and universities to design new teaching curricula for purposes of Continuing Professional Development as well as the professionalization of evaluation (MyFEPS Drafting Team, 2016).

Malaysia's monitoring and evaluation progress is also a result of media pressure. The media has started demanding governmental transparency and accountability related to meeting people, and stakeholders needs and expectations (Ahmad & Nasrul, 2011). The state of

affairs of the Malaysian government transparency and accountability have been captured by several worldwide studies that indicate Malaysia needs to put rigorous effort in improving its accountability and transparency (Bakar & Ismail, 2011). The federal government is now facing a stronger system of check and balance to meet the public's expectations to stay relevant in the Malaysian political landscape. Sanger (2008) as quoted by Bakar, Saleh, & Mohamad, (2011) highlighted the weakness of the current practice of performance measurement development in Malaysia, which does not include participation of civil societies. It may not be able to serve the public's interests, who are the main recipient of the system. Learning from the past two (2) general elections that witnessed swing of votes from the ruling parties, media is heavily used in the current NTP implementation to highlight the achievement and success stories. It becomes a mechanism of check and balance by reporting the achievement and results of government policies and programs.

***Performance Management and Delivery Unit (PEMANDU): Private Sector Element in the Public Service***

In 2009, Malaysia introduced the Performance Management and Delivery Unit (PEMANDU) with the core business to design and facilitate the implementation of the National Transformation Program (NTP). This delivery unit (DU) helps to link between a given policy and citizen outcomes, driving public sector to produce high quality outputs and outcomes. PEMANDU's institutional set up is anchored by the private sector talent with some seconded staffs from the public sector. PEMANDU has acted as a technical support to all ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) in implementing the NTP. It is responsible in monitoring the achievements of each MDAs involved in the implementation of the NTP. Since its establishment, PEMANDU was able to work with the existing building blocks of a performance culture in Malaysia's public sector (*Driving Performance from the Center: Malaysia's Experience with PEMANDU*, 2017).

“Labs” as a multistakeholder problem-solving tool are one of the highest value-added innovative tools that PEMANDU has introduced. “Labs” were one of PEMANDU’s signature innovations that created ownership of the NTP among a wide variety of stakeholders. The Lab is a consultative process that involves an extensive stakeholder engagement workshop focused on a policy priority area. The participants include representatives from the MDAs, both leadership and rank-and-file, as well as representatives from the business community and civil society. PEMANDU’s interaction with stakeholders within and outside the government is key to achieving results. Through Labs, the NTP becomes demand-driven and owned by the implementing agencies (*Driving Performance from the Center: Malaysia’s Experience with PEMANDU*, 2017). Since the establishment of PEMANDU, Labs have proven to be one of the best tools used to stimulate participation and partnership from various parties.

The evaluations that PEMANDU commissions for various programs under NKRA and NKEAs are mostly process evaluation, while the impact evaluation culture is less developed. Impact evaluations seem to be rare among the NTP programs, but without them it is difficult to resolve questions of attribution (*Driving Performance from the Center: Malaysia’s Experience with PEMANDU*, 2017). Designing the NTPs through Labs may have missed the opportunity to build impact evaluations into the program design. Labs are regarded as excellent problem solving platform, ushering consensus building and bringing various stakeholders together. However, introducing sophisticated forward looking technical design features that enable impact evaluations is not the comparative advantage of the Lab method. It is found that impact evaluation is ignored while process evaluation plays greater roles in the Labs approach.

## **Finding and Conclusion**

The role of third party entities in public policy and program cycle has been proven critical. The non-governmental entities such as community groups, media, non-profit organization, research and academic institutions, and international organizations start to take roles in evaluation activities around the globe. Like in many other countries, public policy and program management in Malaysia has experienced various participation and collaboration efforts in its formulation, implementation, and evaluation stages. Despite various efforts introduced, institutions founded, and processes created to include citizen participation in the public policy cycle, the participation pattern is seen greater at the policies and programs formulation and implementation stages rather than in the evaluation stage. A comprehensive and well-coordinated participation system largely may help to increase the level effectiveness of policy processes, thus benefiting the whole government and non-government institutions. However, it is quite vague and uncertain to say whether Malaysia has reached that level of comprehensiveness and coordination where the focus is more on formulation and implementation stages. Despite putting efforts for participatory approach in its policy cycle, it is an established fact that Malaysia faced the implementation setbacks. The foremost issue would be the extent the government uses the evaluation discussion inputs to feedback to the decision-making processes. It is unclear how it is done and how far citizen's voice on the overall policies and programs achievement is heard. Although the designing of NTP through Labs may have created stakeholder ownership, but it did not build in features that would allow impact evaluations of at least some of the NTP programs to take place (*Driving Performance from the Center: Malaysia's Experience with PEMANDU*, 2017). The evaluations that PEMANDU commissions for various programs under NKRA and NKEAs are mostly process evaluations, while the impact evaluation culture is less developed.

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