

## Good Governance Practices for Sustainable Development in the Public Sector Services in Malaysia

*Amalan Tadbir Urus yang Baik untuk Pembangunan Mampan dalam Perkhidmatan Sektor Awam di Malaysia*

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### ABSTRACT

*Good governance is indicated as the remedy that results in political stability and a key basis towards sustainable growth and development that can facilitate the institution's effectiveness and efficiency. Malaysia has been seen to be practising good governance in the public institutions through the holistic reform agenda that requires the highest quality of ethics and conduct for every level that aims to strengthen transparency and increase accountability throughout administrative activities. Therefore, this paper seeks to uncover the status of good governance for sustainable development in public administration in Malaysia. In this paper, studies from literature reviews and reports from the Economic Planning Unit, Malaysia Plan, and Public Service Ethics are used as a research method to describe the status of good governance for sustainable development in Malaysia. This practice of good governance is noticeable in most of the plans and policies that already assist public institutions in enhancing their quality and performance for delivering services for the citizen. However, the criticisms towards the public sector services remain to be heard, and this process of enhancing the quality and performance is challenging. This is why the holistic reform plan is considered the dawn for Malaysia in routing towards good governance for sustainable development.*

*Keywords: Good governance; governance; public administration; public sector services; sustainable development*

### ABSTRAK

*Tadbir urus yang baik dinyatakan sebagai penyelesaian yang dapat menghasilkan kestabilan politik dan asas utama kearah peningkatan dan pembangunan mampan yang boleh memudahkan keberkesanan dan kecekapan sesebuah institusi. Malaysia dilihat mengamalkan tadbir urus yang baik di dalam institusi awam melalui agenda reformasi secara holistik yang juga memerlukan kualiti etika dan tingkah laku terbaik bagi setiap peringkat dengan tujuan untuk memperkukuhkan ketelusan dan meningkatkan akauntabiliti sepanjang aktiviti pentadbiran dijalankan. Oleh itu, kajian ini bertujuan mendedahkan status tadbir urus yang baik untuk pembangunan mampan dalam pentadbiran awam di Malaysia. Kajian ini menggunakan ulasan daripada kajian lepas dan laporan daripada Unit Perancang Ekonomi, Rancangan Malaysia dan Etika Perkhidmatan Awam kaedah penyelidikan untuk menggambarkan status tadbir urus yang baik untuk pembangunan mampan di Malaysia. Amalan tadbir urus yang baik ini dapat dilihat dalam kebanyakan rancangan dan dasar yang telah membantu institusi awam dalam meningkatkan kualiti dan prestasi mereka untuk memberi perkhidmatan kepada rakyat. Walau bagaimanapun, kritikan terhadap perkhidmatan sektor awam tetap didengari dan proses untuk meningkatkan kualiti dan prestasi adalah mencabar. Oleh sebab itu, pelan pembaharuan yang holistik dianggap sebagai permulaan bagi Malaysia dalam menghalau kearah tadbir urus yang baik untuk pembangunan mampan.*

*Kata kunci: Tadbir urus yang baik; tadbir urus; pentadbiran awam; perkhidmatan sektor awam; pembangunan mampan*

## INTRODUCTION

Public sector institution is signified as the backbone of countries that are moving towards conquering sustainable growth and development. Having a better governance system is part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are undertaken to form efficient and effective, accountable and inclusive institutions for each level of government (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs). These SDGs is depended on the capacity of coordination and implementation process through good governance practices in order to reach a quality governance structure. In other words, the public sector is an instrument to answer and respond on behalf of the government in which the reputation of the government depends on the quality and performance of public sector services. The public sector ought to work efficiently and effectively as the competency and credibility in managing the public affairs lie in their hand, as a good quality administration will steer to outstanding administrative performance. The public sector in Malaysia has undergone reforms agenda comprised of transformational policies and plans throughout the years that have emphasised quality service, equitable delivery system, accountability, responsibility and prioritising the people's needs which proves that good governance has been integrated across administrative activities of public sector institutions.

Despite this notable effort to enhance the public sector quality and performance, the demands and criticisms from the public for better services remain to be heard (Nurhazma & Amrizah 2019). This is why the public sector institution has a long way to go and must be amended if the public sector institutions in Malaysia still aim for a better, inclusive and more efficient governance system (Norhaslinda 2021). Good governance is undoubtedly the key factor for improvement and enhancement in various public institutions, yet the emphasis should be committed to the quality and performance of public sector services. Thus, this paper seeks to uncover the status of good governance practices for sustainable development in the public sector institution in Malaysia. In this paper, the emphasis will be on the successes and challenges faced by the public officers that undermine the credibility and worthiness of public sector institutions in Malaysia. This paper shall provide some useful insights about good governance principles practised in public institutions that also aim for sustainable growth and development and facilitate to enhance of the quality and performance together with the highest standard of work conducts and, to become a more reliable, effective and efficient public sector institution in Malaysia. Hence, there are still available areas to enhance good governance practices for sustainable development along with inculcating the highest standard of work performances and qualities in the administration activities that aims for a better governance system and well-functioning government in Malaysia.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### CONCEPT OF GOOD GOVERNANCE

This concept of good governance acts as the key basis that leads to the highest standard, best quality and good performance of public sector activities. Good governance practices can be recognised through the level of efficiency and effectiveness of its public administration services (Rosyidah et al. 2023). In the case of Malaysia, this good governance is essentially being addressed and accepted in most of the policies and plans in order to maintain the efficient and effective manner of government activities. Good governance is simply part of governance but is governed

with the highest standard, best quality and good performance in a democratic background (Mohamed & Petri 2016). This is also said that the success of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is immensely determined by the extent of effectiveness and coordination of the governance systems amongst the institutions. Good governance practices could assist and facilitate the public environment structures to enhance the quality and increase accountability to achieve the goals that drive the sixteenth goal in the SDGs, which is to develop effective, accountable and inclusive institutions for all levels (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs). This better governance system will be coherent to uphold public trust and confidence, increase openness and transparency and promote responsiveness and inclusiveness that will be advanced towards sustainable growth and development.

On the other hand, good governance is significantly interrelated with Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) by the World Bank (2007), which developed this concept into six indicators. The six indicators comprise voice and accountability, political stability, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, the rule of law and control of corruption, signified for reference in good governance practices. This framework is focused on the six indicators created based on Kaufmann, Kraay and Mastruzzi (2009), which the “three core components that are first, the process by which government is selected, monitored and replaced, second, the capacity of the government to effectively formulate and implement sound policies and third, the respect of citizens and the state for institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them” (p. 4). The six indicators of the WGI can be grouped as political, administrative and judicial. For instance, voice and accountability and political stability fall under the political. Two components that fall under the category of administrative are government effectiveness and regulatory quality, while two more components fall under judicial, which are the rule of law and control of corruption (Kwon & Kim 2014). These good governance indicators are intertwined in one framework and are presumed to bring improvement in the quality and performance of governance in administrative affairs.

Although many attempts have been made to improve the effectiveness of public sector administration, Siddiquee (2020) described the public sector as continuing to operate without making major differences in its governance system. In this regard, reform agendas and policy-making processes must apply the concept of good governance, which is apparently considered the best practise to enable the improvement, growth and development of better governance systems in developing countries. Concisely, the World Bank (2023) described good governance as a process of public administration maximizing the public interest and necessities by facilitating public services with the aim of increasing growth and development. Notably, this concept is essential to be developed, gaining the trust and support of the public (Ishtiaq & Steinar 2016), as people’s trust and confidence are recognised as key determinants for good governance. Even though there are varied results and arguments about this concept with the aim of pursuing sustainable development, the absence of this concept could hinder the structures and processes of public sector institutions. Therefore, the aim of having ‘good enough governance’ is considered to be convincing because one size cannot fit all notions. By means, good governance must be practised according to the reality circumstances faced in the public sector institutions, quality performances and services of the respective country.

## PUBLIC SECTOR ADMINISTRATION IN A BRIEF

Historically, public administration is referred to as government management, broadly interpreted as the systems, operations and branches of government with the purpose of fulfilling public policies (Shafritz, Russell, Borick & Hyde 2017). The public sector administration is part of a field whereby the public officers are equipped with expertise and professional skills to manage the activities of government at all levels, including local, state and federal. The public sector mainly provides services to the communities, handle the resources and involve in the decision-making processes. The public sector is known as an instrument for answering and responding towards public needs by serving and delivering services directed on behalf of the government. This is why the reputation of the government depends on the quality and performance of public sector services. Today, public sector administration is often interpreted as a body that is responsible and accountable in implementing and initiating public plans and policies that focus on the aspect of administrative functions comprised of planning, organising, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting and budgeting.

In the early 1980s, Malaysia's public sector services underwent a huge reformation and transformation that aimed for better efficiency and accountability. There is no doubt that bureaucracy exists in all of the government departments of every region. In fact, government agencies have remained bureaucratic and centralised with the hierarchical, strict regulations and monopolies that still occur in today's government. These are displayed as greater complications for the public sector to be effective and efficient in their service delivery system for the people. There is consensus that described simply having accountability as not sufficient for the administration as the public sector has to convey according to the public needs and interests, which the quality of the governance is determined by the outcomes of the well-being of the people (Shah 1996; Huther & Shah 1998). Hence, the administration system and activities are enhanced according to the recent situation and issues that occurred in particular public institutions and agencies.

Moreover, this reform agenda in the public sector is one of the ways to encourage economic stability, strengthen administrative capacity, restore efficiency and enhance accountability. The agenda reform in the public sector was first brought by the Prime Minister of Britain, Margaret Thatcher, who, at that time, the situation in the public sector was under commotion, and that was the starting point of the 'New Public Management' (NPM). This NPM was indicated as a new breakthrough of managerialism which the approaches utilised in the public sector are based on the private sector management system. The main idea of having a good government is to ensure the processes and procedures taken ought to be executed within a specific time range (Nurul Liyana, Sherilyn & Nur Hairani 2022). Malaysia also experienced public sector reform in the reign of the fourth Prime Minister, Tun Mahathir Mohamad, who aimed for a better administration system and delivery services.

The main objective of implementing the NPM was to address the issues of mismanagement and lower capacity of the administration system. This NPM was an effort by the government to overcome the number of commotions that occurred in the public sector services that, included eliminating misconduct and bad work ethics. This is being mentioned by Jamaliah, Mahmudul and Mohamad Azizal (2015) that public sector reform has begun to strengthen the quality and performance of delivery services by enhancing and upgrading their technological system, which correspondent to the aims of having efficient and effective manner as the quality of government system services faced public's dissatisfactions and criticisms that could lead to mistrust and low confidence in public sector services. This administrative reformation of NPM aims to re-enhancing

and re-planning the service delivery of the public sector in various aspects by promoting transparency and openness, a flexible administrative system, no central bias, and enabling public participation (Indahsari & Raharja 2020). This is the main agenda and crucial period for the government to restore the public's confidence and strengthen the efficiency of public sector services.

#### GOOD GOVERNANCE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN PUBLIC SECTOR

Public sector institution is known to be the entity that holds the highest responsibility for the government to deliver services and manage tasks of public affairs, and the government's reputation depends on the performance of the public sector. Undeniably, public institutions play a significant role in accomplishing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which then again, from a global perspective, the public sector reform must be amended according to the 11 Principles of Effective Governance for Sustainable Development in order to achieve the shared goals and visions of the SDGs 2030 Agenda (Bouckaert et al. 2018). These 11 basic principles will accommodate practical, tactical, and thorough guidance and then be operationalised in various forms of governance challenges simultaneously to avoid risks and confusion about implementing the SDGs. This will eventually help the countries grasp a mutual understanding of effective governance for sustainable development. Besides, these principles are comprehended based on the contextual realities, capabilities and capacities and the degree of development whilst complying with the policies and priorities of countries in various governance structures.

The principles focus on three major areas, i.e. effectiveness, accountability and inclusiveness (Bouckaert et al. 2018). The first three principles emphasised effectiveness, which includes competence, sound policy making and collaboration. UN DESA (2019) explains the first principle, competence, implies performing their tasks and duties effectively; institutions are required to have competent public officers with optimum resources and the best mechanisms to manage any duties instructed by the authority. These are common-shared strategies that comprise of having quality-based performance management, thorough training for public officers, outcomes-based management, promotion in the workforce, effective fund utilisation and an advanced system for e-government. The second principle is that sound policy-making is about implementing and creating policy that ought to be consistent with other policies as well and must be drafted based on facts. This focuses on creating policies with tactical plans, strong monitoring mechanisms, best contingency strategies and rigorous enforcement to achieve their targeted results. The third principle, collaboration, refers to a collective consensus and coordination at all levels in every government sector, in which all sectors require to oblige to work collectively and cooperatively to tackle issues faced with the same objectives, purposes and interests.

Another three principles concentrating on accountability are integrity, transparency and independent oversight. Bouckaert et al. 2018 further explains the fourth principle, integrity, is about serving the public interest and delivering public services with fair treatment and a high-quality manner that is coherent with the code of conduct and ethics in the public sector services. The execution of tasks and duties must be operated with high standards of ethics, which are honesty, righteousness, no corruption and bribery involved throughout working practices. Transparency is the fifth principle, which describes as increasing accountability, openness and transparency that allows for public opinions to voice out in all structures, processes and decision makings of government functions with flexible accessibility towards government information. The government should disclose information, for instance, government budgets, open data related to the government and any registries and ownerships that occurred. The sixth principle, independent



oversight, refers to maintaining the public trust and confidence towards the government, where oversight agencies that come for supervision and evaluation have to be operated strictly and rigorously without involving any personal considerations. This is related to having an independent entity that could assess any arrangements, evaluate the decisions taken and review the outcomes of the government's functions.

The last five principles focus more focusing on inclusiveness, which is leaving no one behind, non-discrimination, participation, subsidiarity and intergenerational equity (UN DESA 2019). The principle of leaving no one behind is indicated that none of the community is being excluded, where the public needs and interests are heard and acknowledged by the government and fulfilled through public policies. This includes all communities regardless of which segments, especially amongst the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups who are usually left behind and bound to be discriminated against. By leaving no one behind, it incorporates operating the institutions, not only through providing equal opportunities but with fair treatment, maintaining equity in releasing finances and systematic feedback channels. The eighth principle is non-discrimination, which implies respecting and protecting the rights of the people in order to have freedom of voice and speech especially having flexible accessibility to public services without discriminating against any race, religion, social status and others. This includes employing a diversity of staff in public institutions, forbidding any unfair treatment in public service delivery and providing extra-close assistance for those having disabilities. The ninth principle is participation which involves a participatory development process between public institutions and the community, especially the politicians and political groups who have to be actively promoted and involved with the community, particularly matters and policies that could affect and benefit them. This also includes being transparent in regulatory processes, participatory budgeting systems and creating mechanisms for community participation development.

Bouckaert et al. 2018 explicates the next principle as subsidiarity, which refers to the government that should be operated effectively according to the governance structures, which are divided into levels and must be subordinate to each level. Federal, state and local government should be cooperative, and at the same time, responsibility has to be allocated efficiently based on the levels of government in order for the government to be answerable and responsive to the public needs and interests. This includes federal authority towards fiscal allocation, strengthening state and local capacity, enhancing state and local financial systems and multilevel governance structures. Finally, the last principle, intergenerational equity, is created to sustain prosperity and quality of life that could be balanced out based on the short-term necessities for the current generation and long-term necessities for future purposes. This consists of a sustainable development evaluation system, managing the public debt, controlling the ecosystem and mitigation planning for external issues. These principles are created with the aim to assist and facilitate public institutions together with guidance and operational practices based on the contextual realities in order to achieve the SDGs and develop accountable, effective and efficient institutions.

Indeed, Malaysia also continues to adopt a holistic approach to good governance, which has been incorporated into the national policies and plans throughout the years since its Independence. Malaysia also has its ways and approaches to practising good governance for sustainable growth and development in the public sector services, where it can be remarked that some of the approaches are similar to the 11 Principles of Effective Governance for Sustainable Development. In Malaysia, the concept of good governance has long been rooted since the first national policy in 1970 that is the New Economic Policy (NEP) and has continuously been

embraced till the current policy. The key components of these policies were aimed at restructuring the socio-economic life of the society, emphasising balanced economic development growth, strengthening the national unity among various races and prioritising the needs of the people. In each of the policies implemented by the government, there were amends made to enhance the policies' structure, reinforce political institutions and improve administrative performance. Many initiatives outlined the important elements of good governance and aimed at enhancing the quality of efficiency and effectiveness of the public sector system across all segments in Malaysia (Siti, Mu'azu & Aidi 2019). The reform agenda requires promoting transparency and accountability with good work ethics, best practices and a quality governance system at each level so that the public's confidence towards the government can be restored significantly (Maizatul, Mahmudul & Jamaliah 2016).

On the other hand, no discussion about the Malaysian public sector service is complete without mentioning the key person, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, during his first reign as the Prime Minister. Most of the public sector services that we see today bear his imprint and influence. He introduced significant changes at that time, which were seen as dramatic under the slogan "Clean, Efficient and Trustworthy" as all the public officers had to undergo training, strict supervision, wore name tags and recorded arrival times using punch clocks. He also integrated the Prime Minister Department Office along with the Malaysian Administrative and Planning Unit (MAMPU) to take control and action towards public sector services. This was activated for reviewing, supervising and restructuring offices to become effective and efficient. MAMPU is one of the few central agencies in Malaysia that is accountable for 'modernising and reforming' the public sector in the aspects of administrative reforms and transformations (Ahmad & Malike 2005). In short, MAMPU proposed the Key Performance Indicator (KPIs) to examine the capacity and management of the public sector agencies at all levels, upgrading the system operation, accelerating the implementation of development, introducing innovative and effective ideas for planning and development and controlling the usage of resources.

Apart from that, the National Transformation Policy (NTP) has become another breakthrough set by the government that advocates the importance of good and wide-ranging governance in Malaysia. This was introduced in 2011 by Dato' Sri Najib Razak that demonstrated a new trademark of the transformational agenda. The NTP focused on the government's performance that was under the slogan of 1Malaysia, People First, Performance Now. This helped the government in identifying the loopholes and inconsistencies in policy planning and policy outcomes, which has to go through under the setting of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). This NTP is proclaimed as the instrument to facilitate and improve public service delivery through Government Transformation Program (GTP) that focuses on the National Key Results Areas (NKRAs). This GTP is one of the major plans that was created solely to make the government more competent and answerable to people's demands. The program is concerned with comprehensiveness and inclusiveness that reach broad consensus and correspond to the best interests of the people. Their needs were captured and instilled as the foundation in the NKRA, which is under GTP's plan. In the direction of operating the GTP, Strategic Reform Initiatives (SRIs) have been proposed, which will later accelerate the progress and major transformation in public service delivery (PEMANDU 2010).

This NKRA is adopted for transforming the administrative operation system efficiently, especially for public service delivery, and increase accountability for all possible circumstances. Performance Management and Delivery Unit (PEMANDU) was assigned to administer the overall development of NTP and strengthen the delivery systems of GTP and NKRAs. The government

has also committed to its determination and persistent efforts in improving the quality of delivery services and providing initiatives for the communities that reach the people's satisfaction. Subsequently, these have navigated towards higher economic productivity, quality workforce and positive outcomes than the previous government as the initiatives under GTPs have increased the efficiency of public service delivery and uplifted people's living standards (Mohamad Fairuz & Mohammad Agus 2022). This embraced the significance of good and comprehensive governance in Malaysia (PEMANDU 2010). Hence, the road of transformation is seen as a successful policy and with this transformation agenda, the government will become more inclusive that engage in effective and good governance on its pathway.

This good governance manifests the goals of sustainable development as such, developing and strengthening the institutions with efficiency, effectiveness and accountability at every level, which is also aimed at the sixteenth goal and in line with good governance practices and the SDGs. In addition, there was a realisation about lacking important institutions in the national system of governance, which then the National Anti-Corruption Plan (NACP) established and gives a clear road map that seeks to improve existing institutions. This NACP emphasises the six dimensions comprised of the importance of political governance, public administration, public procurement, legal and judicial proceedings, law enforcement and corporate governance (Prime Minister Department 2019). Currently, in the case of Malaysia, good governance practices can be described based on the NACP, which has been presented as a governance reform programme by the National Governance, Integrity and Anti-Corruption Center (GIACC).

The NACP initiated reformation and transformation in every dimension through these four major principles of good governance. These will intensify the standard and enhance integrity, especially for public purview. This practice of good governance considers to be feasible when the political actors, private sectors and public play their respective functions in the governance reform. For this reason, good governance principles ought to have governance indicators to evaluate, assess, supervise and review thoroughly the government activities and progress at federal, state and local government. The governance indicators consist of four dimensions that measure the public sector administration based on its transparency, accountability, efficiency and effectiveness, as these are crucial for a well-functioning government (Anis et al. 2020). These governance indicators are necessary for Malaysia to increase accountability, promote inclusiveness, strengthen efficiency and enhance effectiveness in their working practices, but not only that, Malaysia also desires to attain its target of becoming a developed nation and high-income nation that coordinates with the goals of sustainable development. In short, governance indicators will be a measuring tool to assess and provide scores about the quality and performance of the public sector services in the capacity of their work practices and outcomes. From this, it can pinpoint every aspect of whether the task given by the government is being managed and handled efficiently and effectively by the public officers or not.

Anis et al. 2020 describes the dimensions of the Malaysian Governance Indicators (MGI) are portrayed with transparency, which implies the condition where public information can be made accessible, flexible and reachable for public scrutiny. This includes evaluation and assessment, where the establishment of clear guidelines and procedures to enhance transparency in the decision-making processes helps to reduce discretion and risk corruption. It measures the extent of accessibility of certain information on national policies, decision-making processes and procedures that are being publicly shared. Second, increase accountability related to the process of improving and restoring the conditions that enable the public to hold the institution to be accountable and responsible for their action and inaction, as there should be a participatory



development process between the officers and the public and a broad consensus on public needs. This indicator assesses the check and balance system through the extent of the public institutions being responsible and answerable for their actions.

Third, efficiency refers to the measurement and evaluation of the extent to which the policies have been implemented, and the capacity of fund utilisation reached its optimum level. This indicator of efficiency is measured by the time taken by the institutions to provide the services, manage the tasks and solve the issues that include the level of capabilities of public officers. Fourth, effectiveness describes whether the objectives and goals of policies that have been implemented are in line with the intended purposes. This indicator assesses the ability of institutions to manage challenges and risks which to strengthen the productivity and performance of public sector services. Based on this dimension of the MGI, the indicators are seen to be coordinated with the sixteenth goal of sustainable development, where transparency, accountability, efficiency and effectiveness are being addressed as the main indicators that will be measured for public sector services in Malaysia with the aim to develop a well-operating government (Anis et al. 2020).

These governance indicators do matter as these indicators will assist and facilitate the understanding of how public sector agencies are coordinated and the scope of policies and laws are regulated and implemented. The governance indicators will thoroughly assess, evaluate, supervise and monitor the political institutions and public sector administration at all levels. In addition, these indicators will detect and analyse any issues and problems that arise for the purpose of constructing contingency plans and improving the quality of policy planning and decision-making. The governance indicators measure the government's ability to create and enforce the rules to deliver the services, which concentrate on the execution and enforcement of policies by the public administration. This is considered an effort by the government to strengthen the public sector services to be operated in a check and balance environment which precede the best quality and performance. This also involved the action of being transparent and open with the public, where the public can critically comment and share their opinion about the quality and performance of delivery services offered by the public institutions through feedback channels provided by the government. This action will strengthen the public trust and confidence towards the government in governing a country.

In brief, INTAN has produced its own specific regulations and standards through a book on Public Service Ethics. This book is a guide for public officers to apply the highest quality of conduct, integrity and ethics by understanding and appreciating comprehensive sources on work ethics. This notably shows the administration system in Malaysia has begun to shift towards inclusive and good governance practices (Etika Perkhidmatan Awam 2021). Meanwhile, good governance will be the primary element to reform the governance system in a more transparent and efficient manner in the public sector (Eleventh Malaysia Plan 2016-2020). Good governance is evidently stated as a causing factor that significantly increases the efficiency and effectiveness of an institution, and with that, this practice of good governance has been claimed to lead the public sector services for a better governance system, high quality and best performance (Noor Azman, Fauziah & Ramlah 2017). The authors also mentioned that the achievement of a quality governance system is technically dependent on the degree to which the efforts are appropriately practised and applied in the public sector services. The values and principles of good governance will be instilled in every level of public institutions, together with suitable procedures and rigorous systems aiming for governance reformation and transformation.

The Eleventh Malaysia Plan 2016-2020 was targeted at reforming and upgrading the current status of public administration with the application of good governance practices. There were new priorities that have been introduced with the purpose of addressing the conflicts faced by the public sector administration. As such, comprehensive reform agenda is needed to attain efficient and effective public sector administration, which could restore and regain the public's confidence towards the public sector. Hence, various agenda reforms have been initiated by the government to establish better-quality management for the public sector as well as to improve the quality of the governance system. The key emphases to reform the governance system in a more transparent and efficient manner in the public sector are classified into four areas. First, strengthening the governance system at every level implied check and balance in the current institutional set-up between the executive, legislative and judiciary. The division of powers has to be implemented in order to ensure no centralisation and bias within the government system. Thus, public sector administration is guaranteed to be more organised, structured and administered with a better governance system in their working activities. Second, elevating integrity and accountability is known as continuous efforts towards inculcating and improving good governance, also must be addressed consistently. The public sector administration requires to improve the capacity of transparency and openness, which enables the participatory development process between the government and the public and, later, creates an open government environment. This will encourage a feedback channel mechanism where the public can address and share their opinions and necessities that could enhance the quality of services for public institutions.

The third priority area is to enforce prudent public finance management, which covers the aspect of optimal utilisation of funds and resources that the government must be committed to be more transparent and accountable. A comprehensive agenda reform implemented in the administration, monitoring and evaluation framework of the budgeting system and expenditure allocation, which is in line with the equitability and pragmatic usage of public funds. Fourth, improving public service delivery had to undergo rigorous reforms at every level of the administration system and working activities with the purpose of ensuring faster and more efficient service delivery for the people. The public service will offer seamless services and equal treatment with faster response towards public needs. Meanwhile, the current efforts of reforming the public sector services will be strengthened and enhanced to the highest level of quality administration system. This fourth priority emphasises specifically public service delivery in upgrading and accommodating the operational services and work processes. The performance of delivery services by the public officers is very important because they are perceived as the first-hand that are dealing directly with the people (Eleventh Malaysia Plan 2016-2020).

## SUGGESTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

A holistic approach to good governance practices for sustainable development has been rigorously presented in the public sector services in Malaysia. Good governance practices are visible and present, especially around the central agencies, policies and plans that have adopted good governance as their main component to attain effective and efficient public sector administration. There is no doubt that the complaints and criticisms about the public sector services would remain to be heard continuously by the people because it is difficult to satisfy each of every need and request from the people. This effort of enhancing and strengthening the quality and performance

of public sector services is undeniably difficult and challenging, yet, it is not impossible. Practising good governance has significantly increased the quality of the governance system that definitely shows positive progress and effective growth and development throughout public sector services in Malaysia, as practising this good governance is used to fix mismanagement and inefficiencies issues which have already caused the low-quality and performance of institutions. Though aiming for 'good enough governance' is considered more convincing and realistic because one size cannot fit all notions. By means good governance must be practised according to the reality of situations and circumstances faced in the public sector institutions and the level of quality performances and services of the respective country. This can facilitate the institutions to enhance and thoroughly focus on their quality and performance while delivering the services to the people and, at the same time, achieving a better and more effective governance system which coordinated with the sixteenth goal under sustainable development.

In addition, there are some efforts that could possibly enhance the quality and performance of public sector services alongside practising good governance for sustainable development. First, the current plans and policies that focus on reforming the public sector administration must be reviewed thoroughly from time to time. The government should stop implementing and creating new plans as having various new plans and programs would not help the public sector institutions to be managed in an efficient and effective manner, but somehow turned out to be redundant with the previous plans and making the public sector confused about which one to comply. There will be certain conditions where the current plans and policies will not be suitable for the reality circumstances, as there will be changes and issues from time to time, so the government should completely eliminate the plans, make amendments and disclose the actions. Besides, the government of the day should have only one main department that centralises all the guidelines of the public sector working practices for the planning of the government in order to avoid commotions and misunderstandings, even though the government of the day will change in the future. The government of the day may change from time to time, but the working practices and guidelines of public sector services shall not be amended hastily. Because although administration reformations and amendments were made numerous times, the shortcomings can still be detected. That is why the government should only focus on and enforce better plans and guidelines rather than come up with and create new ones. The process of creating and implementing the plans for public sector services is truly essential, but the process of monitoring, supervising and enforcing the plans is strictly and critically important as these will determine the outcomes and results whether the plans are successful and suitable to be implied in the public sector services or not.

Second, the government could strengthen the monitoring mechanism and evaluation system of the performances of public sector services. This framework should be strengthened by creating specific measures and tools that can evaluate and monitor with a holistic approach and report the performances of the public sector with thorough feedback and systematic inspection at all levels. There must be a comprehensive report about the performances of public sector services so that it can review and coordinate with the main issues that are needed to be improved. The monitoring mechanism and evaluation system are essential as these cover the whole quality and performance of delivery services in public institutions. From this mechanism and systems, the precise working activities will be strictly underlined and enforced without leaving any aspects behind. All of these suggestions directly show the presence of good governance practices for sustainable development in public sector services. Therefore, the most important point is the government should focus on the issue and reality situation faced by the public sector administration itself rather than simply adopting good governance just because of the ideality of this concept.

This is being said that good governance has indeed become the remedy for the effectiveness and directly affects the quality and performance of institutions, even though with the same structures and processes applied in the institutions, the effectiveness of good governance is still depending on the benchmarks of governance system set by the institutions which significantly lead to different forms of developments and improvements (Siti & Danilah 2011). If the benchmarks of a good governance system are being set up too high, the public sector services will not be able to reach the target, and eventually, they will be regarded as not efficient. Thus, practising 'good enough governance' (Grindle 2007) is considered suitable to the real situation and current circumstances of the public sector administration, which seems to be achievable for Malaysia in routing towards good governance for sustainable development, yet it is a never-ending route and definitely tough effort for the government to attain the highest quality of public sector services in Malaysia. But then again, this good governance for sustainable development can be possibly accomplished by initiating this action one at a time and implementing the good governance practices gradually in the public sector services without pressuring the public sector institutions. These good governance practices for sustainable development are not for short-term purposes, but these are long-term resolutions and commitments that public institutions have to be devoted to accomplishing a better governance system and a well-operating government. Hence, public institutions must undergo and operate with consistent coordination, systematic procedures and rigorous monitoring mechanism at every level of the government.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the public sector administration in Malaysia is perceived as actively inculcating good governance practices for sustainable development in their administrative affairs and working practices. Good governance practices, including openness, transparent, accountable, answerable and inclusiveness, are visible and presented across all working affairs in the public sector, which is in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This article has uncovered the status of good governance practices for sustainable development in the public sector institution in Malaysia. However, it has only specifically focused on several reform agendas and transformation plans. All of the reform agendas and transformation plans described in this article have adequately disclosed that the presence of good governance practices for sustainable development in each and every plan was significantly successful, though there were weaknesses and leakages that required some improvements over time. Greater emphasis and priority in agendas and plan on strengthening, amending and restructuring the administrative and governance system, an instrument to facilitate and improve the public service delivery through Government Transformation Program (GTP), has intensified and improved the quality and integrity largely indicating the status of good governance in the public sector services in Malaysia. These efforts of good governance practices for sustainable development are resumed with the establishment of the Malaysian Governance Indicators (MGI) under the National Anti-Corruption Plan (NACP), which has shown the real determination of Malaysia to ensure and strengthen the quality of the public sector services in the capacity of their work practices and outcomes. The national plans and policies have addressed the important guidelines of practising good governance that is coordinated with the sixteenth goal of sustainable development, which is to develop effective, accountable and inclusive institutions for all levels. This holistic administrative reformation and transformation is considered the dawn for Malaysia in routing towards good governance for sustainable

development, even though it is a tough route for the government to attain the highest quality and better performance of public sector services in Malaysia. Nevertheless, practising good governance is not in doubt as applying this practice; could eventually improve the standards, provide better performances and enhance the qualities of working practices of public sector services in Malaysia because the absence of this practice might hinder the structures and processes of public sector institution from being administered and managed smoothly. Therefore, Malaysia still has available areas to enhance good governance practices for sustainable development with gradual efforts for a better governance system and well-functioning government in their public sector services.

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