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PUBLIC SERVICE REFORM AGENDA MODEL IN MALAYSIA: AN EVALUATION USING THE FUZZY DELPHI METHOD APPROACH

Shamsul Azri Abu Bakar[1]*, Wan Mohd Hasif Wan Muhamat Ali[2], Rosmini Omar [3], Fauziah Sh. Ahmad[4], Ong Sin Ru[5]*

[1]Azman Hashim International Business School (AHIBS), Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
shamsulazri@graduate.utm.my https://orcid.org/0009-0001-5432-2334
[2]Azman Hashim International Business School (AHIBS), Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
hasif@jpm.gov.my https://orcid.org/0009-0003-7971-8188
[3]Azman Hashim International Business School (AHIBS), Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
rosmini.kl@utm.my https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6283-8998
[4]Azman Hashim International Business School (AHIBS), Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
fsa@utm.my https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5493-1431
[5]Azman Hashim International Business School (AHIBS), Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
dorisongsnr89@gmail.com https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9380-2050
*Corresponding Author

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Abstract:

Public service reform in Malaysia has developed through successive initiatives that have emphasized economic restructuring, performance management, integrity, digitalization, and citizen-centred service delivery. However, these priorities have often been addressed separately, leaving limited empirical validation of an integrated model that connects governance values, human capital, organization development, service delivery, and cross-sector collaboration. The Public Service Reform Agenda (ARPA) was introduced to bring these dimensions together within a single national reform framework. This study aims to validate the dimensions of the ARPA model for public service reform in Malaysia using the Fuzzy Delphi Method (FDM). A panel of 47 senior public service experts assessed the five ARPA dimensions and their associated strategies. Consensus was established

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using three acceptance criteria: a threshold value of d<=0.2, expert consensus of at least 75%, and a fuzzy alpha-cut value of at least 0.5. All five dimensions met the acceptance criteria. Across the validated elements, the analysis recorded an aggregate threshold value of d=0.078, expert agreement of 97.0%, and a fuzzy alpha-cut value of 0.924. The findings support the relevance of Appreciation of Value and Good Governance, Human Capital Development, Organizational Development, Service Delivery, and Public-Private Sector Synergy as interrelated dimensions for structuring public service reform in the Malaysian context. The study therefore provides expert-based validation of the model's dimensions and a clearer basis for subsequent refinement, implementation, and evaluation, rather than evidence of implementation effectiveness.

Keyword:

Fuzzy Delphi Method, Governance, Malaysia, Public Service Reform, Triangular Fuzzy Numbers

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Introduction

Public service reform refers to governments' efforts to restructure, improve, and modernise state institutions to enhance governance, organisational performance, and the quality of public services. It encompasses adjusting the government's role in society, refining internal operations, and implementing interventions that strengthen employee performance and institutional effectiveness (Krogh & Triantafillou, 2024; Barbier & Tengeh, 2023; Bezzina et.al, 2021; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017; De Vries & Nemec, 2013; McCourt, 2013). Reform is driven by multiple pressures, such as budget constraints, public demands for accountability, technological change, globalisation, and the need to modernise governance which prompt governments to rethink how they operate.

Public service reform is framed through several theoretical lenses. The New Public Management (NPM) theory emerged in the 1980s and applied economic principles as well as private-sector practices to improve public sector efficiency using tools such as performance measurement, contracting, and managerial oversight (Hood, 1991; Lapuente & Van de Walle, 2020; Fatemi & Behmanesh, 2012). Reforms under NPM were shaped by political choices, institutional histories, and external pressures (Christensen & Lægreid, 2022). Critics pointed out that NPM often led to fragmented services, weak accountability, and neglect of public values. In response, the New Public Governance (NPG) theory promoted collaboration, networks, and co-production to involve citizens and stakeholders more directly (Torfing et al., 2019). More recently, Digital Era Governance (DEG) highlights how technology transforms

public services and citizen engagement and earlier reform ideas from NPM continue to influence how governments work and adapt (Mergel et al., 2021; Lindquist, 2022). Eventually, effective public sector reform lies not in privileging one paradigm over another, but in pragmatically integrating the efficiency discipline of NPM, the collaborative ethos of NPG, and the transformative potential of DEG into a coherent, context-sensitive governance approach that can be translated into adaptive, citizen-centered practice.

In Malaysia, public service reform is an ongoing national effort shaped by long standing economic progress, political change and the aspiration to become a high income and developed nation as reaffirmed in the Thirteenth Malaysia Plan which places strong emphasis on strengthening governance improving public sector performance and enhancing service delivery (Economic Planning Unit, 2023). The Malaysian civil service, administered by the Public Service Department, plays a central role in this effort, comprising more than 1.3 million civil servants responsible for implementing national policies and delivering services to citizens (Jabatan Perkhidmatan Awam, 2023). Reform initiatives such as the New Economic Policy (1971), Government Transformation Programme (2010), and the Malaysia MADANI framework (2023–2030s) reflect a gradual shift from a primary focus on administrative efficiency toward broader priorities including integrity, inclusivity, accountability, and digital readiness, demonstrating Malaysia's continued commitment to responsive and value-driven governance. Despite these efforts, the public sector continues to face structural and operational challenges, including bureaucratic red tape, fragmented governance, limited performance accountability, and uneven policy implementation across agencies, weaknesses that have been documented across Auditor General reports spanning multiple years and ministries (Singh, 2024; Jabatan Audit Negara, 2025). Earlier reforms were often top-down in nature, with limited stakeholder engagement and weak implementation mechanisms, which reduced their long-term impact (Siddiquee, 2006). Recent studies suggest that effective reform must address interconnected dimensions such as governance, talent management and development, organisational structure, service delivery, and public–private partnerships to achieve sustainable outcomes (Aeries et al., 2024; Abdul Latif, 2023). In September 2024, the Public Service Reform Agenda (ARPA) model was developed as a strategic framework to strengthen public service delivery, enhance efficiency, uphold integrity, and focus on citizens. ARPA takes an integrated approach, guided by whole-of-government and whole- of-nation principles (Performance Acceleration Coordination Unit (PACU, n.d.). This study aims to validate the dimensions of the ARPA model for public service reform in Malaysia using the Fuzzy Delphi Method (FDM).

Against the background, this paper is organized as follows. The next section discusses relevant literature on the evolution of public service reform in Malaysia as well as the development of the ARPA model. The methodology section describes how this study employs the Fuzzy Delphi Method and the findings are later presented. We conclude the paper with an implications and future possible avenues for further empirical work and practice-oriented innovation in public service reforms.

Literature Review

Malaysia's public service reform has evolved alongside the country's development needs. In the early post-independence period, the civil service mainly focused on maintaining public order and delivering basic services (Jabatan Perkhidmatan Awam, n.d.). The administrative

system inherited from the British colonial government was highly rule-driven (Yaakob et al., 2012). This structure provided stability but limited flexibility and responsiveness. The public sector also faced weaknesses in coordination and administrative capacity. Representation within the civil service did not fully reflect Malaysia's demographic and socioeconomic aspirations.

During the 1970s, the government expanded the public sector under the New Economic Policy (NEP) to reduce poverty, restructure society, and strengthen Bumiputera participation in the economy (Jomo, 2017). In the 1980s and 1990s, reforms influenced by New Public Management (NPM) introduced privatisation, corporatisation, performance measurement, and total quality management to improve efficiency and reduce the government's financial burden (Siddiquee, 2006). However, these reforms were criticised for reflecting Western administrative assumptions that were not fully compatible with Malaysia's hierarchical public sector, while concerns were also raised over the transparency of privatisation (Lee, 2021; Singh, 2024). In the 2000s, reform priorities shifted towards strengthening integrity, transparency, and accountability through initiatives such as the National Integrity Plan (Institute Integrity Malaysia, n.d.).

The Government Transformation Programme (GTP), introduced in 2010, strengthened monitoring, accountability, and citizen-centred service delivery through Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and National Key Result Areas (NKRAs) (PEMANDU, n.d.), although concerns remained regarding selective reporting and pressure on civil servants (Siddiquee, 2014). Following the 2018 political transition, reforms continued through the National Anti-Corruption Plan and renewed emphasis on institutional independence. More recently, the Madani Government introduced the Agenda Reformasi Perkhidmatan Awam (ARPA) to accelerate digitalisation, reduce institutional silos, and improve administrative coordination (Performance Acceleration Coordination Unit, n.d.). Nevertheless, Malaysian public service reform continues to face challenges related to hierarchical organisational culture, adaptive leadership, and the gap between policy aspirations and implementation, highlighting the important role of middle and senior administrative leaders in translating reform into practice (Singh, 2024).

Across different contexts, reforms in public service evolved beyond a single universal model due to the heterogeneities of governance, institutional capacities, socio-political as well as political-economic priorities. Several major models of public service reform that have been practised in developing countries, including traditional public administration, decentralisation, pay and employment reform, New Public Management, integrity and anti-corruption reforms, and bottom-up reforms (Roach et.al, 2025; Khaled, 2025; McCourt, 2013). Hence, public sector reforms reflect an encompassing agenda that change structural, behavioural, managerial, and socio-economic elements.

Recent public service reform literature shows that digitalisation and citizen-centred service delivery have become increasingly central to contemporary reform (Mangai & Ayodele, 2025; Choi & Cuccinello, 2026; Wang, 2026). The OECD Digital Government Policy Framework positions digital government as a means to redesign procedures, simplify administration, re-engineer workflows, and improve whole services rather than merely digitising existing processes (Ubaldi & Okubo, 2020). In response, current government innovation has begun to emphasise human-centred public services, collaboration between service providers and users,

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and adaptive government practices that respond to changing societal needs (Bason & Austin, 2022; Hietala, 2024). These developments indicate that reform today requires an integrated model that combines governance values, capable public servants, organisational agility, responsive service delivery, and cross-sector collaboration.

Against this broader literature, we posit that a public service reform for Malaysia could consider five dimensions, conceptually grounded as ARPA. These dimensions are intended to address major challenges in Malaysia's public service reform efforts. Firstly, the dimension of appreciation of value and good governance reflects the integrity, accountability, openness, fairness, and trust-building concerns in built through good governance and anti-corruption reform models (Akinbi, 2025; Chen et.al, 2025). This first dimension focuses on strengthening integrity, accountability, and transparency in the public service. Although these principles are consistently emphasised in reform policies, the real challenge lies in how they are understood and practised in everyday administrative work (Yaakob, Kadir, & Jusoff, 2009). While policy frameworks and regulatory improvements show progress, their effectiveness ultimately depends on behavioural change, institutional commitment, and consistent enforcement (Hanafi, Yatim, & SalimS, 2025).

Secondly, the dimension regarding to human capital development draws from civil service reform and capability-based approaches should emphasise skills, competencies, leadership, motivation, and productivity (Ahmad et.al 2025; Pham et.al 2023). Essences of human capital development, recognises that capable and motivated public servants are central to successful reform. However, gaps often remain between organisational values, individual competencies, and actual performance outcomes. Although training programmes and competency frameworks are in place, skill mismatches, fragmented development efforts, and weak links between capability and productivity continue to limit impact (Tatt et al., 2024).

Thirdly, organisational development is linked to reforms of government machinery, institutional restructuring, process improvement, and administrative coordination (Melaletsa et.al, 2023). ARPA requires the element of organisational development in order to addresses structural and administrative challenges within the public sector. Bureaucratic rigidity, overlapping mandates, and regulatory complexity can slow decision-making and reduce responsiveness (Mohd Zaki et al., 2023).

Service delivery reflects the citizen-centred, digital, and human-centred reform agenda that has become increasingly important in contemporary public administration (Hussain, 2025; Shittu et.al, 2023). This fourth dimension of ARPA focuses on improving how government services are delivered to citizens. Although digital initiatives have expanded in recent years, many services still rely on outdated procedures and face limited coordination across agencies, which can affect citizen experience and public trust (Ahmad et al., 2024).

Finally, public–private sector synergy corresponds with collaborative governance, whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches, and partnership-based models that recognise the role of non-state actors in addressing complex public problems (Schaller, 2021; Rösler et.al, 2021). The fifth dimension, public–private sector synergy, highlights the importance of collaboration between the public sector, private sector, and wider community. While such partnerships have strong potential to improve efficiency and leverage specialised expertise, they also face governance and capacity challenges, particularly in contract management and accountability (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2025).

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Malaysia has implemented successive public service reform initiatives, but many have concentrated on particular priorities such as economic restructuring, performance management, integrity, digitalization, or administrative coordination. Earlier reforms have also often relied on top-down implementation. As a result, there is limited empirical evidence on a single Malaysian reform model that brings together and good governance, human capital development, organizational development, service delivery, and public-private sector synergy. ARPA was introduced to integrate these dimensions within one national reform framework, but its dimensions had not yet been formally validated. This study addressed the gap by evaluating whether the five ARPA dimensions are supported by expert consensus in the Malaysian public service using the Fuzzy Delphi Method.

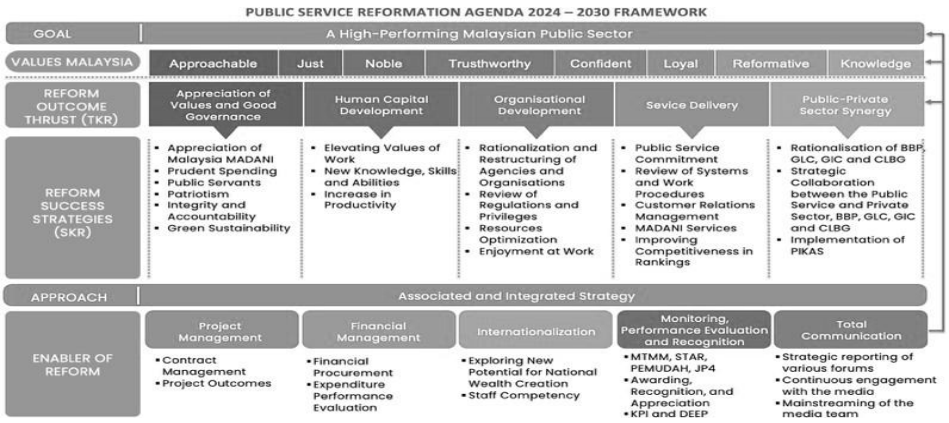


FIGURE 1: Public Service Reform Agenda (ARPA) Model

(Source: Researchers)

Against the background, this paper is organized as follows. The next section discusses relevant literature on the evolution of public service reform in Malaysia as well as the development of the ARPA model. The methodology section describes how this study employs the Fuzzy Delphi Method and the findings are later presented. We conclude the paper with an implications and future possible avenues for further empirical work and practice-oriented innovation in public service reforms.

Methodology

This study applies Fuzzy Delphi Method (FDM) to validate the five dimensions of the ARPA model and the strategies associated with each dimension. FDM was introduced by Murray, Pipino, Van Gigch (1985) and later refined by Kaufmann and Gupta (1988). It combines fuzzy set theory with the classical Delphi technique to translate expert judgements into measurable levels of consensus under conditions of uncertainty. Compared with the conventional Delphi technique, FDM can reduce the number of survey rounds and allows experts to express degrees of agreement without direct confrontation (Siraj et al., 2013; Saido et al., 2018; Wan Mohd Hasif, 2020; Yusof, Hashim, & Hussain, 2022). In this study, an ARPA element was accepted when it met all three criteria: threshold value d<= 0.2, expert concensus>= 75%, and fuzzy alpha-cut>=0.5. These criteria provide a transparent basis for determining whether the proposed dimensions and strategies achieved sufficient expert agreement.

The methodological strength and flexibility of FDM have led to its application across different disciplines (Saffie, Shukor, & Rasmani, 2016; Hassan et al., 2024; Daud et al., 2024). In public administration research, where governance reforms often involve multiple stakeholders and contextual uncertainties, FDM provides a structured and rigorous approach for establishing expert consensus (Jamil et al., 2024). Accordingly, this study adopts FDM to assess whether the ARPA dimensions and associated strategies meet predefined consensus criteria. The method provides evidence of expert agreement on the content of the model; it does not, by itself, establish the effectiveness of ARPA implementation.

This study uses stratified sampling approach to obtain representation across different hierarchical, functional, and service categories. The FDM panel comprised 47 senior public service experts from federal ministries, departments, and central agencies. Participants had at least ten years of substantive experience in public administration, policy formulation, or policy advisory roles relevant to Malaysia's public sector. The panel include senior leaders with direct experience of public sector reform, allowing the validation process to draw on practical policy and administrative knowledge.

Data were collected through a structured FDM questionnaire developed from the literature on public service reform and the proposed ARPA dimensions. The questionnaire was reviewed for content relevance before being administered to the 47 experts. Responses on a seven-point Likert scale were converted into Triangular Fuzzy Numbers to support fuzzy aggregation and consensus analysis. Consensus was assessed using three acceptance criteria: d<=0.2, group agreement of at least 75%, and alpha cut>=0.5. Items that met all three criteria were accepted. Defuzzifucation was then used to convert fuzzy values into crisp scores and to determine the relative priority of the items. This process enabled the expert judgements to be synthesized systematically while retaining the uncertainty inherent in subjective assessments.

The data analysis for this study conducted using the Fuzzy Delphi Method (FDM), following the six-step procedure proposed by Alias, DeWitt, and Siraj (2013). Step 1 - determining the number of experts. The initial phase involved determining the appropriate number of experts. This research consisted of 47 experts (n = 47). This panel size aligns with literature recommendations, which suggest 10–50 experts for reliable Delphi-based studies (Ariffin & Nordin, 2025) and note that samples above 30 allow for normal distribution assumptions (Lin, Lai, & Wu, 2020). Thus, the chosen panel provides sufficient expertise and credibility to generate consistent and robust results in the Fuzzy Delphi process.

The 47 FDM experts were drawn from federal ministries, departments, and central agencies, including Public Service Department (JPA), Ministry of Finance (MOF), Attorney General of Malaysia (AGC), the Prime Minister's Department, and the National Audit Department, among others. This wide institutional representation ensured diverse policy perspectives across the Malaysian public service. The panel was dominated by senior leadership, with the majority serving as Secretary General (57.4%) and Director General (25.5%). Several held top national positions, including Attorney General, Chief of Defence Force, Auditor General, and Accountant General. This strong representation from the highest echelon enhances the credibility of the findings. Most experts possessed extensive experience, with 83% having 30 to 34 years of service, reflecting deep familiarity with governance and public administration. In terms of academic qualifications, 85.1% held postgraduate degrees (Master's or PhD). This further strengthens the basis for interpreting the expert input obtained through the FDM process.

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Step 2 – conversion to triangular fuzzy numbers (TFN). The Likert scale responses were converted into corresponding fuzzy scale values (as in Figure 2). Figure 2 shows experts' responses are expressed as triangular fuzzy numbers, represented by three values of *m1* (the minimum value), *m2* (the middle value), *m3* (the maximum value). These three values form a triangular shape that captures uncertainty in expert responses more richly than a single Likert score.

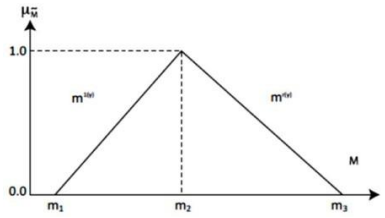


Figure 2: Triangular Fuzzy Number

(Source: Researchers)

The conversion follows the seven-point linguistic scale detailed in Table 1.

TABLE 1: Seven-Point Scale of Linguistic Variables

Linguistic Variable	Likert Scale	Fuzzy scale
Very strongly disagree	7	(0.0, 0.0, 0.1)
Strongly disagree	6	(0.0, 0.1, 0.3)
Disagree	5	(0.1, 0.1, 0.3)
Not sure	4	(0.3, 0.5, 0.7)
Agree	3	(0.5, 0.7, 0.9)
Strongly Agree	2	(0.7, 0.9, 1.0)
Very strongly agree	1	(0.9, 1.0, 1.0)

(Source: Researchers)

Assuming fuzzy number is the variable for each criterion for expert K for:

i = 1, ..., m
j = 1, ..., n
k = 1, ..., k and
$r_{ij} = 1/K (r^1 \quad r^2 \quad r^K \quad ij \pm \quad ij \pm \quad ij)$

In this study, experts first rated each construct and item using a seven-point Likert scale. These Likert scores were then converted into corresponding triangular fuzzy numbers to enable fuzzy aggregation and consensus analysis (as in Figure 3).

EXPERT	ITEM														
	DV1			DV2			DV3			DV4			DV5		
1	0.9	1	1	0.9	1	1	0.9	1	1	0.9	1	1	0.9	1	1
2	0.9	1	1	0.7	0.9	1	0.7	0.9	1	0.9	1	1	0.5	0.7	0.9
3	0.9	1	1	0.5	0.7	0.9	0.7	0.9	1	0.7	0.9	1	0.7	0.9	1

Figure 3: Converting Process from Likert Scale to Fuzzy Scale

(Source: Researcher)

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Step 3 – calculation of threshold value (*d*). The threshold value (*d*) was calculated to measure the distance between the individual expert's evaluation and the overall group average using this formula:

$$d(\breve{m},\breve{n}) = \sqrt{\frac{1}{3}[(m_1 - n_1)^2 + (m_2 - n_2)^2 + (m_3 - n_3)^2]}$$

This step is critical in determining the level of agreement among the panel members for each specific item. In this study, items with a threshold value of $d \leq 0.2$ were considered to have achieved expert consensus, while items with $d > 0.2$ would require further review or an additional round. All items in this study recorded d values of 0.2 or below, indicating general agreement among the experts.

Step 4 – assessment of expert consensus. Expert consensus was evaluated based on two primary criteria: the threshold value (*d*) and the percentage of group agreement through this formula: (Number of experts agreed ÷ Total number of experts) x 100

Consensus was further assessed by calculating the percentage of experts meeting the threshold criterion. Consistent with traditional Delphi standards, a consensus level of at least 75% was required for acceptance (Romero Jeldres et al., 2023). The percentage was computed by dividing the number of experts with $d \leq 0.2$ by the total number of experts (47) and multiplying by 100. For example, 46 out of 47 experts agreed on item DV1, resulting in a consensus of 97.9%. All five items under Dimension 1 exceeded the 75% benchmark, with three items achieving full consensus (100%) (as in Figure 4).

	ITEM				
	DV1	DV2	DV3	DV4	DV5
No. item with d ≤ 0.2	46	42	47	47	47
% of each item with d ≤ 0.2	97.9%	89.4%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Figure 4: Determine Expert Consensus Percentage

(Source: Researchers)

Step 5 – aggregation of fuzzy numbers. Identify the value of average fuzzy numbers by adding all the fuzzy numbers, and fuzzy evaluation aggregated, using this formula:

$$\breve{A} = \begin{bmatrix} \breve{A}_1 \\ \breve{A}_2 \\ \vdots \\ \breve{A}m \end{bmatrix}$$

i = 1, ..., *m*,

This value will be used to determined *average fuzzy numbers* or *average response* in the *defuzzification* process.

Step 6 – defuzzification and ranking. The final step involved defuzzification, which converts fuzzy values into a single crisp score for validation and ranking purposes.

Fuzzy evaluation A_{max} = A_{max} = (A1, A2, A3) is *defuzzificated* with formula: A_{max} = 1/3 (m1 + m2 + m3)

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An α-cut value of 0.5 was applied, representing the midpoint of the fuzzy scale. Constructs and items with average fuzzy scores above 0.5 were accepted. This process allowed the study to confirm priorities and establish the relative importance of each construct in a clear and systematic manner.

Results and Discussion

Dimension 1 comprises five strategies: Appreciation of Malaysia MADANI (DV1), Prudent Spending (DV2), Public Servants' Patriotism (DV3), Integrity and Accountability (DV4), and Green Sustainability (DV5). As shown in Table 2, all five strategies met the FDM acceptance criteria ($d \leq 0.2$, consensus $\geq 75\%$, α-cut ≥ 0.5), indicating strong expert agreement. The dimension recorded a low average threshold value ($d = 0.063$), high expert consensus (96.83%), and a high average α-cut value (0.937), confirming its robustness. Integrity and Accountability (DV4) achieved the strongest agreement, underscoring its importance in public service reform.

TABLE 2: FDM Data Analysis for Dimension 1- Appreciation of Value and Good Governance

Code item	Item/ Strategies	Triangular Fuzzy Numbers		Defuzzification Process				Expert Consensus
		Threshold Value, *d*	Percentage of expert consensus, %	m1	m2	m3	Fuzzy *α-cut* Value	
DV1	Appreciation of Malaysia Madani	0.059	97.9%	0.849	0.972	0.998	0.940	**Accepted**
DV2	Prudent Spending	0.101	89.4%	0.811	0.945	0.989	0.915	**Accepted**
DV3	Public Servants Patriotism	0.058	100.00%	0.845	0.972	1.000	0.939	**Accepted**
DV4	Integrity and Accountability	0.034	100.00%	0.870	0.985	1.000	0.952	**Accepted**
DV5	Green Sustainability	0.110	100.00%	0.772	0.921	0.985	0.893	**Accepted**
Average		0.063	96.83%	0.844	0.969	0.997	0.937	**Accepted**

d value ≤ 0.2 | percentage of experts' consensus ≥ 75% | *Fuzzy α-cut* Value ≥ 0.5
(Source: Researchers)

Dimension 2 consists of three strategies: Elevating Values at Work (DH1), New Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (DH2), and Increase in Productivity (DH3). Table 3 shows that all strategies fulfilled the FDM acceptance criteria, indicating strong expert validation. The dimension recorded a low average threshold value ($d = 0.059$), high consensus (97.87%), and a high average α-cut value (0.938), confirming its validity. Productivity (DH3) demonstrated the strongest expert agreement, suggesting that enhancing workforce capability and performance is viewed as a key priority for sustainable public service reform.

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TABLE 3: FDM Data Analysis for Dimension 2 – Human Capital Development

Code item	**Item/ Strategies**	**Triangular Fuzzy Numbers**		**Defuzzification Process**				**Expert Consensus**
		Threshold Value, *d*	Percentage of expert consensus, %	m1	m2	m3	Fuzzy *α-cut* Value	
DH1	Elevating Values at Work	0.076	95.74%	0.828	0.957	0.994	0.926	**Accepted**
DH2	New Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities	0.055	97.87%	0.853	0.974	0.998	0.942	**Accepted**
DH3	Increase in Productivity	0.047	100.00%	0.857	0.979	1.000	0.945	**Accepted**
Average		0.059	97.87%	0.846	0.970	0.997	0.938	**Accepted**

d value ≤ 0.2 | percentage of experts' consensus ≥ 75% | *Fuzzy α-cut* Value ≥ 0.5
(Source: Researchers)

Dimension 3 comprises four strategies: Rationalization and Restructuring of Agencies and Organizations (DO1), Review of Regulation and Privileges (DO2), Resources Optimization (DO3), and Enjoyment at Work (DO4). As shown in Table 4, all four strategies met the FDM acceptance criteria (d ≤ 0.2, consensus ≥ 75%, α-cut ≥ 0.5), indicating strong expert validation. The dimension recorded a low average threshold value (d = 0.098), high expert consensus (94.68%), and a high average α-cut value (0.910), confirming its robustness. Resources Optimization (DO3) achieved the strongest agreement, highlighting its importance in organizational reform.

TABLE 4: FDM Data Analysis for Dimension 3 - Organizational Development

Code item	Item/ Strategies	Triangular Fuzzy Numbers		Defuzzification Process				Expert Consensus
		Threshold Value, *d*	Percentage of expert consensus, %	m1	m2	m3	Fuzzy *α-cut* Value	
DO1	Rationalization and Restructuring of Agencies and Organizations	0.116	97.87%	0.768	0.919	0.983	0.890	**Accepted**
DO2	Review of Regulation and Privileges	0.094	95.74%	0.785	0.936	0.991	0.904	**Accepted**

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DO3	Resources Optimizations	0.070	95.74%	0.840	0.966	0.996	0.934	**Accepted**
DO4	Enjoyment at Work	0.110	89.36%	0.811	0.943	0.985	0.913	**Accepted**
Average		0.098	94.68%	0.801	0.941	0.989	0.910	**Accepted**

d value ≤ 0.2 | percentage of experts' consensus ≥ 75% | *Fuzzy α-cut* Value ≥ 0.5
(Source: Researchers)

Dimension 4 comprises five strategies: Public Service Commitment (DS1), Review of Systems and Work Procedures (DS2), Customer Relationship Management (DS3), MADANI Services (DS4), and Improving Competitiveness in Rankings (DS5). Table 5 shows that all five strategies fulfilled the FDM acceptance criteria (d ≤ 0.2, consensus ≥ 75%, α-cut ≥ 0.5), demonstrating strong expert agreement on their relevance to the ARPA model. The dimension achieved a low average threshold value (d = 0.070), very high expert consensus (97.02%), and a high average α-cut value (0.928), confirming its validity. Public Service Commitment (DS1) recorded the strongest agreement, underscoring its importance as the foundation of effective service delivery.

Table 5: FDM Data Analysis for Dimension 4 - Service Delivery

Code item	**Item/ Strategies**	**Triangular Fuzzy Numbers**		**Defuzzification Process**				**Expert Consensus**
		Threshold Value, *d*	Percentage of expert consensus, %	m1	m2	m3	Fuzzy *α-cut* Value	
DS1	Public Service Commitment	0.034	100.00%	0.870	0.985	1.000	0.952	**Accepted**
DS2	Review of Systems and Work Procedures	0.066	97.87%	0.840	0.968	0.998	0.935	**Accepted**
DS3	Customer Relation Management	0.087	95.74%	0.798	0.943	0.994	0.911	**Accepted**
DS4	MADANI Services	0.071	97.87%	0.832	0.964	0.998	0.931	**Accepted**
DS5	Improving Competitiveness in Rankings	0.093	93.62%	0.794	0.940	0.994	0.909	**Accepted**
Average		0.070	97.02%	0.827	0.960	0.997	0.928	**Accepted**

d value ≤ 0.2 | percentage of experts' consensus ≥ 75% | *Fuzzy α-cut* Value ≥ 0.5
(Source: Researchers)

Dimension 5 comprises three strategies: Rationalization of BBP, GLC, GIC, and CLBG (DP1), Strategic Collaboration between the Public Service and Private Sector (DP2), and Implementation of PIKAS (DP3). As presented in Table 6, all three strategies met the FDM acceptance criteria (d ≤ 0.2, consensus ≥ 75%, α-cut ≥ 0.5), indicating strong expert validation. The dimension recorded a low average threshold value (d = 0.099), exceptionally high expert consensus (98.58%), and a high average α-cut value (0.906), confirming its robustness. Strategic Collaboration between the Public Service and Private Sector (DP2) achieved the

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strongest agreement, highlighting the importance of cross-sector partnerships in reform implementation. Overall, the findings validate Public–Private Sector Synergy as a core dimension of the ARPA model, emphasizing collaboration and coordinated implementation to support sustainable public service reform.

TABLE 6: FDM data analysis for Dimension 5 - Public-Private Sector Synergy

Code item	Item/ Strategies	Triangular Fuzzy Numbers		Defuzzification Process				Expert Consensus
		Threshold Value, *d*	Percentage of expert consensus, %	m1	m2	m3	Fuzzy *α-cut* Value	
DP1	Rationalization of BBP, GLC, GIC, and CLBG	0.117	100.00%	0.781	0.926	0.985	0.897	**Accepted**
DP2	Strategic Collaboration between the Public Service and Private Sector (BBP, GLC, GIC, and CLBG)	0.080	95.74%	0.823	0.957	0.996	0.926	**Accepted**
DP3	Implementation of PIKAS	0.101	100.00%	0.768	0.923	0.989	0.894	**Accepted**
Average		0.099	98.58%	0.791	0.935	0.99	0.906	**Accepted**

d value ≤ 0.2 | percentage of experts' consensus ≥ 75% | *Fuzzy α-cut* Value ≥ 0.5
(Source: Researchers)

The findings across all five dimensions demonstrate consistently high expert agreement, showing strong support for a comprehensive, value-driven, and future-oriented public sector reform agenda. Dimension 1 highlights the importance of internalizing national values, where good governance is understood not merely as compliance with formal rules, but as a deeply embedded value system shaping leadership behavior, institutional culture, accountability, and citizen-centered service delivery. Experts emphasize ethical leadership, integrity, sustainability, patriotism, and fiscal prudence, supported by a Whole-of-Government and Whole-of-Society approach. Dimension 2 further strengthens this foundation by positioning human capital development as a strategic and holistic ecosystem that integrates leadership development, talent management, future-ready competencies, and employee well-being, particularly in response to digital transformation and emerging technologies such as AI.

Dimension 3 conceptualizes organizational development as an integrated transformation process involving structural alignment, digitalization, cultural change, and leadership capability. Experts stress the importance of benchmarking, specialization, and coordinated performance mechanisms, while maintaining attention to employee welfare and work–life balance. Dimension 4 focuses on service delivery as a citizen-centred and adaptive system, where reforms are guided by the real needs and experiences of the rakyat. While digitalization remains important, experts highlight the need for process improvement, effective communication, and trust-building to ensure meaningful outcomes. Dimension 5 reframes public–private collaboration as a broader and more inclusive synergy model that incorporates not only formal partnerships but also engagement with civil society and community actors that supported by transparency, accountability, and shared outcomes.

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Based on the quantitative FDM results and qualitative expert feedback, several refinements were made to strengthen the clarity and coherence of the ARPA model (as in Figure 6). In Dimension 1, the strategy "Appreciation to Malaysia MADANI" was refined to "Appreciation of Nationhood and Patriotism", integrating the element of public servants' patriotism. In Dimension 2, a new strategy on high-quality leadership was introduced to reflect its critical role in human capital development. For Dimension 3, the strategy "Review of regulations and privileges" was removed, while "Public Servant Well-being" was added to emphasize organizational sustainability. In Dimension 4, several strategies were refined for clarity and relevance, including "Public Service Commitment" to "ILTIZAM Service Efficiency", "Review of Systems and Work Procedures" to "Service Digitalization", "MADANI Services" to "Citizen-Centric Services", and "Improving Competitiveness in Rankings" to "Creativity and Innovation." Finally, in Dimension 5, the strategy "Implementation of PIKAS" was refined to "Strategic Collaboration between Public Service, Private Sector, and Community", reflecting a more inclusive and integrated partnership approach. Collectively, these refinements enhance the conceptual clarity, practical relevance, and overall robustness of the ARPA model. The refined ARPA model is presented at FIGURE 5.

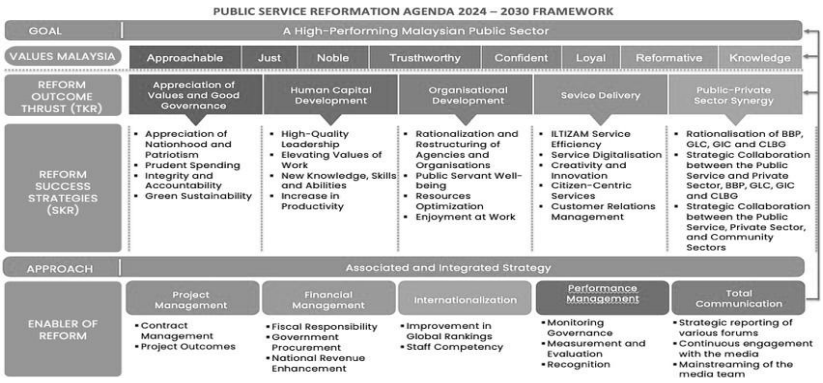


Figure 5: Refined Public Service Reform Agenda (ARPA) Model
(Source: Researchers)

Conclusions

This study contributes to the theoretical development of public administration and governance by developing the Public Service Agenda Reformasi (ARPA) framework using the Fuzzy Delphi Method (FDM). Grounded in Malaysia's institutional realities, policy priorities, and administrative culture, the ARPA model offers a context-sensitive perspective that extends comparative public administration literature beyond predominantly Western reform frameworks. It also provides a practical analytical framework for understanding and guiding public service reform in Malaysia. This study validates the five dimensions of the ARPA model using the Fuzzy Delphi Method (FDM). Its main contribution is to provide expert-based evidence that 'Appreciation of Value and Governance', 'Human Capital Development', 'Organizational Development', 'Service Delivery', and 'Public-Private Sector Synergy' are relevant dimensions for the Malaysian public service context. Rather than presenting ARPA as a complete solution to public service reform, the findings clarify the areas that senior public service experts consider important to address together within an integrated reform approach.

Methodologically, Fuzzy Delphi Method (FDM) provided a structured way to assess the level of agreement among the expert panel. Consensus was achieved across the validated elements in a single round, with an aggregate threshold value of d=0.078, expert agreement of 97.0%, and a fuzzy alpha-cut value of 0.924. These values meet the study' predefined acceptance criteria and indicate strong expert consensus. The results therefore support the use of FDM for this validation exercise, while further empirical research is still needed to examine how the ARPA model performs during implementation.

For policymakers and public service leaders, the validated dimensions provide a structured reference for considering reform priorities across governance, workforce capability, organizational arrangements, service delivery, and cross-sector collaboration. The validation drew on the assessments of 47 senior experts from Malaysia's federal public service including Secretaries-General, Directors General, the Attorney General, the Chief of Defense Force, the Auditor General, and the Accountant General. Their assessments provide informed expert support the model's dimensions while institutional implementation and reform outcomes remain matters for subsequent evaluation.

Future research should examine ARPA model through qualitative, longitudinal, and case-based studies across ministries and agencies to understand how its dimensions operate in practice. Comparative studies across ASEAN and Commonwealth settings may also help assess the model's transferability. Overall, this study establishes expert consensus on five interrelated dimensions of Malaysia public service reform. The validated dimensions provide a clearer basis for organizing and examining reform priorities, but they should be treated as a framework for further implementation and evaluation rather than as evidence of reform effectiveness.

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Declaration on the Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) "The author(s) declare that generative AI or AI-assisted technologies were used during the preparation of this manuscript. The tool(s) were used: Grammarly. The tool(s) were used for grammar improvement. All AI-assisted content was reviewed and verified by the author(s), who take full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, integrity, and final content of the manuscript."

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