

Public Policy Management and Good Governance: Challenges and the Way Forward

ABSTRACT

The world is facing extraordinary challenges. Policymakers are attempting to develop institutions that are able to cope with rapid changes in demographics, the environment, and the economy. Policymakers are part of the system in which governments operate. Numerous external and internal pressures continuously attack this structure. Exogenous changes or fresh knowledge caused policies to be reversed or revised more frequently than necessary. In India, policymakers are confronted with an increasing number of issues caused by various types of complexity. In this complex environment, the demand for good policy making is steadily increasing. The objective of this paper is to study various facets and dimensions of good governance from public policy perspective. The paper also explores the public policy alternatives and methods to address the issues and challenges of good governance in India. During the discussion, the authors found that corruption and poor capacity building are main impediments in establishing good governance which in turn hampers the efficiency and equity in the provision of public services, thereby weakening the enforcement mechanism of public policy management principles. The paper also revealed that for effective public policy management and administration, there is a dire need to formulate and implement stringent rules and regulations against the menaces like illegal use of force, corruption, bureaucratic bungling, criminalisation of politics and other constraints hampering good governance. Therefore, to create checks and balances across tiers of government and to correct the existing distortions, the paper suggests reform strategies such as decentralisation of public services through participation of private sector, involvement of poor people in state sponsored development programmes, outcome orientation and having women representation in democratic institutions for ensuring good governance. In order to accomplish these desired social changes, enacting strong legislation with severe penalties and its rigorous execution is the need of the hour.

Keywords: Public-Policy, Good Governance, Corruption, Formulation, Implementation, Participation, Public Services

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decades, many reforms in government have been aimed at increasing efficiency, effectiveness and value for money with very little focus on the actual policy process and the way it affects the ability of policy

makers to meet the needs of constituencies in an increasingly complex, uncertain and unpredictable world. However, if this core process were to be modernized, it would yield considerable economic and social benefits, including enhanced productivity, openness, transparency and participation, as well as actionable and interoperable policy intelligence (Geurts, 2011).

The public policy making structure refers to the various branches of government and the individuals and entities within each branch that play a role in making and implementing policy decisions. The making of public policy for a country as large, populous and diverse as India is intrinsically a more complex task than in a smaller political unit. This makes a study of the institutions which make policy all the more important (Agarwal & Somanathan, 2005).

Policy making is not, by and large, simply a matter of problem solving, of taking some common goal and seeking the “best” or most cost effective “solution”. It is rather a matter of choice in which resources are limited and in which goals and objectives differ and cannot easily be weighed against each other. Hence policy making is a matter of conflict (Simeon, 1976).

Policies can be regarded as political, management, financial and administrative mechanisms that are arranged to achieve explicit goals. Policies may apply to government, to private sector organisations and groups, and to individuals (Guerts, 2011). David Easton defines public policy as “the authoritative allocation of values for the whole society.” The agency which can authoritatively act on the whole society is government. The study of public policy, its formulation, implementation, and impact is critical since its importance is growing in both developed and developing countries. Its importance is magnified in developing countries, because it is expected to execute a variety of functions through its executive agency, the government.

A good public policy is critical to enhance good governance. Good governance is a concept that defines the principles, tactics, and standards used by government agencies to encourage interaction and the building of political will in response to societal and technological changes. Good governance doesn't happen by chance. Citizens must demand it, and the nation state must feed it explicitly and purposefully. In the words of Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, “Good governance must aim at expansion in social opportunities and removal of poverty.” It is, therefore, necessary that the citizens are allowed to participate freely, openly and fully in the political process. The citizens must have the right to compete for office, form political party and enjoy fundamental rights and civil liberty. Good Governance has always been associated with political leadership, enlightened policy making along with the concept of transparency and accountability. It aims in expanding the social

opportunities and envisages the removal of poverty (Singh, 2008). It ensures that corruption is minimised, minorities' perspectives are considered, and the voices of society's most vulnerable are heard in decision-making. It is also relevant to society's current and future requirements.

One of the most important functions of government is to make public policy decisions. A perfect policy is definitely necessary for proper societal management and its upliftment. If public policy goes in the wrong direction, it has far-reaching effects for society as a whole. Public policy making is a difficult and dynamic process. Policy making entails a number of steps. It involves a number of sub-structures, the extent of which is determined by the circumstances and society ideals. Making public policy is a continual process that necessitates a constant flow of resources and motivation. Gerston (1997) suggests that an issue will appear and remain on the public policy agenda when it meets one or more of three criteria. It must have sufficient scope (a significant number of people or communities are affected), intensity (the magnitude of the impact is high) and/or time (it has been an issue over a long period).

A public policy may be either positive or negative. Some form of overt governmental action may deal with a problem on which action is demanded (positive), or governmental official may decide to do nothing on some matter on which government involvement was sought (negative." Public policies are designed to accomplish specified goals or produce definite result, although these are not always achieved.

Review of Literature

Social science and the task of improving policy making were at the heart of the work of Herold Lasswell, a founding father of public policy as a field of study. H. Lasswell describes policy sciences as the culmination of efforts to define a discipline for producing and applying "socially relevant knowledge". His vision of policy sciences is multidisciplinary, contextual, problem-oriented, and explicitly normative.

According to Lasswell the "policy sciences" are not to be equated with "applied social science" or "applied social and psychological science". "Nor," he admonished, "are the 'policy sciences' to be thought of as largely identical with what is studied by the political scientists". The stress in this approach "is upon the fundamental problems of man in society". Lasswell (1971) identified two separate approaches to the policy sciences: one emphasising knowledge of the policy process and another emphasising knowledge for use in the policy process. Lasswell's chosen phrase was "the policy sciences of democracy and he asserted that democratisation was an ongoing process and that the particular challenge facing modern democracies was how to ensure that policy making could be informed by a new kind of interaction between knowledge producers and users (Torgerson,

1985). There is very little and not enough evidence that policy making has, in Britain, America or elsewhere, been informed by the kind of relationship envisaged by Lasswell (Fischer, 1998). "A policy is a powerful course of action designed and implemented with the objective of shaping future outcomes in ways that will be more desirable than would otherwise be expected (Anderson, 1979). One way of describing a "good" policy making process is one that "is committed to producing a high quality decision- not any particular decision" and that "invests any decision made with a high degree of legitimacy, power and accuracy" (Moore, 1998).

Public Policy analysis has been variously defined by scholars. Eneanya, Belo, and Anifowose (2010), says it is any type of analysis that generates and presents information in such a way as to improve the basis for policy-makers to exercise their judgment. On his part Chandler and Plano, (1988) posit that policy analysis involves "systematic and data-based alternative to intuitive judgments about the effects of policy or policy options". Ikelegbe (1994:5), defines it as the study of public policy's causes, procedures, development, execution, and consequences. Policy analysis, according to Dye (1976), is "finding out what governments do, why they do it, and what difference it makes." In a similar context, Lowi and Ginsburg define public policy as "a publicly proclaimed objective backed by a sanction, which can be a reward or a punishment" in Fischer, Miller, and Sidney (2007). A public policy can take the shape of "a law, a rule, a statute, an edict, a regulation, or an order" as a course of action (or inactivity). Rein & Schon in their paper defines public policy as, the study of how societies learn (fail to learn) about those problems they define as being public and how they seek to solve (fail to solve) their problems. The aim of government should not be to control and direct, but to facilitate the growth of individuals, organisations and communities that are capable of managing their own continuing transformations (Rein & Schon, 1996). Policy making therefore, nearly always means trade-offs, the giving of something to get something else, losses to one group or section in exchange for (hopefully larger) gains for another (Agarwal & Somnathan, 2005). The period from 1997 has been repeated efforts to define and rationalise policy making. These efforts to improve policy making have varied in scale and focus, and have frequently overlapped or seemed to merge with one another (Hallsworth, et al., 2011).

Public policy making is a collective effort involving various institutions and actors. These include all branches of Government, the executive, the legislative, and the judiciary to a host of non-governmental institutions, associations, interest groups, political parties, academic bodies, Civil servants, domain experts, auditors etc. These play a critical role in determining policies and practices on a global, national and regional or local level. They also codify, formalize, assess or approve policies. However, the final outcome of public policies rests on the executive branch of the government.

Public policy making consists of four phases including initiation, formulation, implementation and evaluation. The process starts by setting an agenda based on an issue or previous decision and ends by handing over the implemented policy to an execution and enforcement layer. It includes identifying the problem, formulating a solution, identifying different alternatives, selecting from those alternatives on the basis of their impact and laying them down in some type of statement. Policy objectives can be communicated and formalised in the form of policy declarations, initiatives, or projects aimed at resolving an issue. Laws, regulations, protocols, directives, and budgetary measures are all examples of policy implementations. Evaluation and verification are an integral part of the policy making process. Many of the consultation activities are intended not only to obtain political support, but also to obtain feedback on the expected impact and effects. In order for good governance, cooperation and involvement of multiple stakeholders is a necessary pre-requisite for effective public policy making. In other words, the formulation and implementation of public policies requires good governance practices intervention.

Public policy is crucial in a growing country like India because it is the springboard for progress. According to records, India has implemented well-articulated developmental, economic, and social policies over the years in order to put the country on the path to significant national progress. However, public policies are frequently formulated without difficulty, but the issue of proper execution remains an open subject.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study how public policy is formulated and implemented in India.
2. To analyse issues and challenges which India's policy making structures are facing in establishing good governance.

Research Methodology

The highlight of this paper is to discuss the framework, public policy alternatives and methods with special emphasis good governance. The study is purely analytical in nature and is based on secondary sources. The data has been collected from government reports, research articles, reports of research agencies and other online resources.

The Context of Governance

Governance refers to processes – how things are done, not just what is done. It refers to the nature of rules that regulate the public realm – the space where state and economic and societal actors interact to make decisions. Good governance refers to the ability to deliver goods to the stakeholders and thus, results in better and

dignified life of the people, greater options to choose from and ensuring transparency in administration. In other words, good governance helps create an environment in which sustained economic growth becomes achievable. Citizens can optimise their returns on investment when conditions are conducive to effective government (Singh, 2008).

According to the United Nations (UN), good governance is based on eight qualities as depicted in below figure-1. These UN principles of good governance have an impact on every manifestation of public sector policy making and execution, regardless of the domain or target group. They require consistency and coherence in policy making and implementation. And at the same time, they require participation, involvement and transparent decision-making in order to bring government closer to citizens and to realize clear and applicable laws and regulations.



Figure 01: PRINCIPLES OF GOOD GOVERNANCE

Source: United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific URL: www.unescap.org/pdf

Given the state of India's economic development, good governance is absolutely critical to give us a competitive edge and sustain growth. It is becoming increasingly evident that it is impossible to separate good governance and sustainable development. However, the challenges to such governance are many folds and are diverse in nature. They arise from changed allocation of public funds, delay in production of records, noncompliance with regulatory provisions, limited database facility and instances of irregularities and fraud. All such challenges lead to the problem of the lack of effectiveness and accountability in the delivery of services which hampers the sustainable growth of human kind.

Major Challenges to Good Governance

Administrative Responses

The Indian administrative environment is characterized by a small number of effective public service delivery innovations and methods, as well as a big number of dismal performances. The widespread lack of accountability procedures is a roadblock to improving services in general. The bureaucratic intricacies and processes make it difficult for citizens and civil society to traverse the system in order to receive timely and high-quality services. Apart from fostering corruption, the lack of openness and secrecy connected with the administrative system since colonial times has also resulted in injustice and favouritism. The frequent transfer of top civil workers has played a significant role in service delivery issues. For instance, a District Magistrate's typical tenure is less than one year in various states. Similarly, projects for development also suffered as a result of frequent changes in project directors. These changes have tended to create a tense social and political balance, which must be addressed collaboratively and collectively at all levels of government apparatus, the politicians, bureaucrats, non-governmental organizations, and the media.

Capacity Building

Capacity building at all levels of an organisation is widely perceived as the most important approach to achieve quality of services and customer's satisfaction. Capacity building in the public sector is primarily reliant on the civil servant's professionalism. The low degree of professional quality of public officials employed in districts and rural areas is becoming more widely recognised. Both the supervisor as well as the manager shows resistance to the capacity-building programme. Change is something that most people dislike. There's also a misconception that increasing capacity means taking on more work. Supervisors and managers are also opposed to staff capacity building because they believe it will reduce their own authority.

The most crucial element in capacity building is leadership. Good leadership aimed at improving organizational culture is integral to capacity building. Capacity building demands staff to behave responsibly and produce desired and agreed upon results. It means a collegiate effort in which an individual or an organization could be made accountable and responsible for any action that they take. To create an environment conducive to capacity growth, access to information, involvement, innovation, and responsibility are required. Information is traditionally the domain of higher-level bureaucrats. This system must be disrupted in order to help people to obtain the information they require to do their tasks. Staff members should be encouraged to actively participate in the group's task.

Criminalisation of Politics

The criminalization of politics as well as the unholy alliance of politicians, civil servants and corporate interests is wreaking havoc on public policy development and governance. The political class as a whole is losing popularity.

The more insidious threat to India's democratic government is the influx of criminals and musclemen into the national and state legislatures in large numbers. A political culture is emerging in which membership in state legislatures and Parliament is considered as a means of obtaining private advantage and profit. Such forces have also made their way into the Council of Ministers, and in an era of coalition politics, a Prime Minister or Chief Minister cannot take forceful action for fear of the government collapsing. Simple living and selfless dedication to public causes are gradually fading Gandhian values. The adage that "whatever high you are, the law is above you" is being challenged.

Corruption

The high level of corruption in India is commonly regarded as a major impediment to improving government quality. Although human greed is undoubtedly a driving force, yet the root causes of corruption is reflected in institutional incentives and a weak enforcement mechanism. Those who are corrupt have contributed to India's soaring graft rate. The government's monopoly as a service and control structure provider, a poorly framed legal framework marked with scarcity of information has contributed to increasing menace of corruption. In India, people's rights have created incentives for corruption. In terms of client public puzzle, corruption is relatively inherent, tormented by obscure regulations and procedures, and undue delay in the resolution of public affairs. Laconically, corruption not only prevents the benefits of globalisation from reaching ordinary people, but it also obstructs openness, accessibility, and accountability across all levels. Hence, there is foremost need to check corruption at all levels through raising public consciousness and strong commitments not to make dishonest compromises which would put down the moral values and ethics of life.

Culture of Violence or Violation of Human Rights

Illegal use of force is regarded as a law and order issue. When viewed through the lens of good governance principles, however, it becomes clear that peace and order are the first step toward growth. Strikes, riots, and terror attacks are all examples of this destructive culture of violence. If the government is relieved of concerns about threats to public safety and security in terms of life and property, it may focus on economic, social, and political progress.

Terrorism is also the most serious danger to the rule of law since it aims to replace or subvert the law. No businessman would want to invest in a region where there is a high level of violence and terrorist activity. In the long run, this has a negative influence on employment, health, education, and the supply of other services to the people. When individuals live in the shadow of violence and terrorism, their social lives grind to a halt, and they become nearly house prisoners or suffer from other forms of mental agonies. The question of human rights is also brought up. Terrorists rarely respect the common man's human rights. However, when the government uses lethal force to combat terrorism, state police may violate the human rights of ordinary civilians. Dealing with this threat demands a clear vision, courage, and understanding, as well as engagement with lawbreakers, settlement of genuine concerns, and cooperation of neighbours and international governments in the battle against terrorism.

Improving Good Governance: The Way Forward

It is commonly recognised that successful governance is dependent not only on sound policy advice, but also on the processes and incentives for developing and implementing good policies. There has to be greater accountability of Politicians to the citizen, autonomy for service providers, and greater ability of citizens to hold service providers accountable for the services they deliver. The reform strategies to establish and improve good governance include the following:

1. The government should unbundle responsibilities across tiers of government to create checks and balances by decentralising provision of public services. This would, to a substantial degree, correct the existing distortions and make officials answerable and accountable to the people. This has ramifications for the devolution of political and financial powers from the national government. Therefore, devolving as much authority as possible to local and regional levels of government can improve the system's ability to encourage citizenship and empower citizens to make better decisions. Officers at the local level have more initiative in execution under the watchful eyes of those who are directly impacted.
2. The involvement and encouragement of private sector in public services such as health, primary education, building infrastructure, water supply and inner-city transport can go a long way in resolving issues related to these areas. This would enable the government to fulfil its obligations to supply core services, which are badly served.
3. Strengthening relations with citizens, their involvement and participation at all stages of planning, implementation and monitoring is a pre-requisite for good governance. It allows government to tap new

sources of policy – relevant ideas, information and resources when making decisions. People must feel a sense of ownership over these plans/programs and be willing to participate in and even contribute to them.

4. A primary area for strengthening governance will be the removal of superfluous procedural rules and regulations that hinder entrepreneurial vitality, create corruption, and hurt the ordinary man. Through a complex structure of delegation of authority, the arbitrary exercise of various government functions is vested in a number of bureaucrats. The fact that the laws and regulations are rarely transparent adds to the problem. To address this problem, it is necessary to rationalise such rules, notify them in a comprehensive and transparent manner. There is dire need of assigning responsibilities, determining accountability of each functionary, clearly laying out time limits for making decisions, and providing administrative and legal recourse in cases of malafide dilatoriness to foster good governance across all levels.
5. Relax regulations in order to remove obstacles to economic participation. Transparency, public consultation and participation are more important than ever to improve policy and reinforce democracy and stability, promoting open and transparent government, while guaranteeing security, privacy and civil liberties is a major challenge of our time and at the same time, success lies in its balanced implementation only.
6. Accountability of politicians and civil servants to ensure that the power given to them through the laws and regulations they implement, resources they control and the organizations they manage is used appropriately and in accordance with the public interest. Social audit of official working would be another way of developing accountability and answerability to the people. Policy implementation is ultimately the responsibility of the permanent executive. It is critical to have a responsive civil service that is professional, energetic, and responsive to the requirements of the public.
7. State-sponsored development programmes must strive to reduce poverty while also increasing worker productivity. Poor people must be personally involved in these efforts.
8. Corruption needs to be nailed at the bottom level every day. The corrupt officials should be blacklisted and barred from serving in our holy self - governing country. New leadership against corruption needs to be built. Experience with e-governance in the state of Bihar, which has helped achieve impressive improvements in the delivery of public services is a great example of how things can be done correctly.
9. Women have a crucial role in good governance. As their representation in democratic institutions has risen, the Indian polity has become more stable. Women can contribute long-term, constructive, and inventive solutions. Women should be more involved in economic programmes since they provide expendable providers, educators, carers, and leaders.

10. Build infrastructure to ensure that organizational capacity is available to handle the growing needs for services, increasing demands for better and more responsive services, and creating conditions for economic progress and social cohesion.
11. The induction of technology along with reengineering of archaic procedures must be encouraged to improve governance, switch over to e-governance. Therefore, in this context, there is a need to gradually move from information dissemination and emailing to advanced applications of ICT in government.
12. Reform public management techniques to address budget shortfalls, external competitiveness pressures (globalisation), antiquated work procedures, excessive centralization, inflexibility, inefficiency, and a perceived lack of public faith in government.

The path breaking Right to Information Act, 2005 which has now become a pioneer tool to the citizens of India for promoting, protecting and defending their rights to know, must be enacted expeditiously and implemented in letter and spirit in controlling corruption and delays in the implementation of government sponsored programmes and in the functioning of public authorities. Owing to the fact that Right to Information brings accessibility to the administration, providing citizens with a critical tool for learning about what the government does and how well it does it. The Act should be used as a powerful tool in the correction of public policies with the use of public feedback, as these policies are designed for the ultimate benefit of the people.

Results and Discussion

There is a lot of optimism on the potential of good governance to transform the internal efficiency of public policy management and the relationship of government with stakeholders. Good governance provides an all-encompassing framework comprising the principles, tactics and standards used by government agencies to encourage the interaction with multiple stakeholders and the building of political will in response to societal and technological changes. The public policy management principles provide a useful conceptual framework to study good governance. Good governance not only places the citizens at the centre-stage, but also provide them voice, empowerment and opportunity to participate in public policy making henceforth, making government officials accountable downwards to the citizens. As regards relationship between good governance and public policy management, the authors found corruption and poor capacity building as main impediments in establishing good governance which in turn hampers the efficiency and equity in the provision of public services thereby weakening the enforcement mechanism of public policy management principles. To be more specific, the poor management practices of public officials - bureaucrats, civil servants, advisors, auditors etc., make it difficult to enforce or implement good governance methods and concepts. To sum up, the study revealed that

good governance as an enabler for effective public policy management requires decentralisation of public services, participative management, outcome orientation, involvement of poor people and women representation in democratic institutions. This will help the general public enjoy the taste of life, freedom, and independence as well as transform India into a developed nation. This study is restricted to the analysis of the link between public policy management and good governance. However, issues pertaining e-governance, fiscal deficit can be further studied from new horizons of public policy management. The study is expected to contribute to the ongoing debate on the link between public policy management and good governance, as well as to the development of a broad consensus on how to confront it in the future.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

"Author A' designed the study, performed the statistical analysis, framed the title, and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. 'Author B' ' managed the analyses of the study and the extensive literature searches. All authors read and approved the final manuscript."

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