

Good Governance

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Abstract

Good governance is an indeterminate term used in the international development literature to describe how public institutions conduct public affairs and manage public resources. Governance is "the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented)".[1] The term governance can apply to corporate, international, national, local governance[1] or to the interactions between other sectors of society. As the term suggests, good governance means governing the people in a way that the interests of the people of all sections are preserved rightfully.

A good and generous government is one where all the individuals, in today's world say almost all the individual's rights are protected and they feel that they are not discriminated from one another on the grounds of cast, creed, sex, race and religion. A day in this 21st Century sadly it is very difficult to find countries and states with good governance. The simplest proof of good governance is found in a state or a country if poverty and illiteracy is absent. But we are all aware of the fact that poverty and illiteracy has not yet been diminished from the developing and under-developed countries.

As a matter of fact, poverty has not been diminished from the best developed countries of the world such as United States of America and Europe. Yes it is true that it is impossible to diminish all these problems in a day but a little bit of proper management can solve the problems to a great extent.

It is essential to clear one thing; the term "good governance" does not only signify the government of a country or state but it signifies proper governance in any organization or institution. Good governance should be present in families at the first place.

The head of the family or the eldest member should be respect by all the other members and a proper code of conduct and decorum should be maintained so that the individuals are disciplined.

Meaning and Objective

The public administration has introduced a new concept-good governance. The term good governance is difficult to define. But this difficulty does not stand on the way of its explanation and pursuance. From the 1980s America is making continuous efforts to achieve lofty ideal of good governance and, at the beginning of twenty first century, the concept of good governance has become an integral part of public administration. Nicholas Henry says that the present era (the twenty-first century) may appropriately be called an era of good governance.

The ideal of good governance is yet to be achieved but continuous efforts are being made. Good governance is today regarded as a paradigm of public administration. Why? It is said that the public administration must be employed to achieve the governance which will come to the benefit of the largest number, if not all members of the body politic.

Eight Elements of Good Governance

Good governance has 8 major characteristics. It is participatory, consensus oriented, accountable,

transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive, and follows the rule of law. Good governance is responsive to the present and future needs of the organization, exercises prudence in policy-setting and decision-making, and that the best interests of all stakeholders are taken into account.

1. Rule of Law

Good governance requires fair legal frameworks that are enforced by an impartial regulatory body, for the full protection of stakeholders.

2. Transparency

Transparency means that information should be provided in easily understandable forms and media; that it should be freely available and directly accessible to those who will be affected by governance policies and practices, as well as the outcomes resulting therefrom; and that any decisions taken and their enforcement are in compliance with established rules and regulations.

3. Responsiveness

Good governance requires that organizations and their processes are designed to serve the best interests of stakeholders within a reasonable timeframe.

4. Consensus Oriented

Good governance requires consultation to understand the different interests of stakeholders in order to reach a broad consensus of what is in the best interest of the entire stakeholder group and how this can be achieved in a sustainable and prudent manner.

5. Equity and Inclusiveness

The organization that provides the opportunity for its stakeholders to maintain, enhance, or generally improve their well-being provides the most compelling message regarding its reason for existence and value to society.

6. Effectiveness and Efficiency

Good governance means that the processes implemented by the organization to produce favorable results meet the needs of its stakeholders, while making the best use of resources – human, technological, financial, natural and environmental – at its disposal.

7. Accountability

Accountability is a key tenet of good governance. Who is accountable for what should be documented in policy statements. In general, an organization is accountable to those who will be affected by its decisions or actions as well as the applicable rules of law.

8. Participation

Participation by both men and women, either directly or through legitimate representatives, is a key cornerstone of good governance. Participation needs to be informed and organized, including freedom of expression and assiduous concern for the best interests of the organization and society in general.

Towards Improved Governance

Good governance is an ideal which is difficult to achieve in its totality. Governance typically involves well-intentioned people who bring their ideas, experiences, preferences and other human strengths and shortcomings to the policy-making table. Good governance is achieved through an on-going discourse that attempts to capture all of the considerations involved in assuring that stakeholder interests are addressed and reflected in policy initiatives.

Characteristic Of Good Governance

- **Participation**

All men and women should have a voice in decision-making, either directly or through legitimate intermediate institutions that represent their interests. Such broad participation is built on freedom of association and speech, as well as capacities to participate constructively.

- **Rule of law**

Legal frameworks should be fair and enforced impartially, particularly the laws on human rights.

- **Transparency**

Transparency is built on the free flow of information. Processes, institutions and information are directly accessible to those concerned with them, and enough information is provided to understand and monitor them.

- **Responsiveness**

Institutions and processes try to serve all stakeholders.

- **Consensusorientation**

Good governance mediates differing interests to reach a broad consensus on what is in the best interests of the group and, where possible, on policies and procedures.

- **Equity**

All men and women have opportunities to improve or maintain their well-being.

- **Effectiveness and efficiency**

Processes and institutions produce results that meet needs while making the best use of resources.

- **Accountability**

Decision-makers in government, the private sector and civil society organisations are accountable to the public, as well as to institutional stakeholders. This accountability differs depending on the organisations and whether the decision is internal or external to an organisation.

- **Strategic vision**

Leaders and the public have a broad and long-term perspective on good governance and human development, along with a sense of what is needed for such development. There is also an understanding of the historical, cultural and social complexities in which that perspective is grounded.

What Are The Main Characteristics of Good Governance?

Good governance is accountable

Accountability is a fundamental requirement of good governance. Local government has an obligation to report, explain and be answerable for the consequences of decisions it has made on behalf of the community it represents.

Good governance is transparent

People should be able to follow and understand the decision-making process. This means that they will be able to clearly see how and why a decision was made – what information, advice and consultation council considered, and which legislative requirements (when relevant) council followed.

Good governance follows the rule of law

This means that decisions are consistent with relevant legislation or common law and are within the powers of council. In the case of Victorian local government, relevant legislation includes the Local Government Act 1989 and other legislation such as the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008, and the Equal Opportunity Act 2010.

Good governance is responsive

Local government should always try to serve the needs of the entire community while balancing competing interests in a timely, appropriate and responsive manner.

Good governance is equitable and inclusive

A community's wellbeing results from all of its members feeling their interests have been considered by council in the decision-making process. This means that all groups, particularly the most vulnerable, should have opportunities to participate in the process.

Good governance is effective and efficient

Local government should implement decisions and follow processes that make the best use of the available people, resources and time to ensure the best possible results for their community.

Good governance is participatory

Anyone affected by or interested in a decision should have the opportunity to participate in the process for making that decision. This can happen in several ways – community members may be provided with information, asked for their opinion, given the opportunity to make recommendations or, in some cases, be part of the actual decision-making process.

It is important to remember that under the *Local Government Act 1989* the council is required to either make decisions or delegate the decision-making power to officers or Special Committees. For more information see How decisions are made.

Limitations to Participation

Good governance and participatory administration are coveted goals for any administrative system. But the process of achieving these goals lies elsewhere. How can these two be attained in the present socio-economic and political system?

There are number of limitations

- (1) People intending to participate for the realisation of democratic rights and ensuring good governance must have the ability that is, must be well aware of the administrative and developmental niceties. The participation in banking or financial administration —special knowledge in these fields is essential. Even a highly qualified person not acquainted with these fields cannot successfully participate. There are also numerous complexities in general public administration—only the experienced and expert bureaucrats can have the ability to run administration. Ordinary people cannot even reach the boundary of administration.
- (2) The mentality or ability to participate must be preceded by interest in all these fields. A majority of the people are found to be disinterested in state affairs or politics. They can criticise the policies or performance of administration but their criticisms are not constructive. This type of disinterestedness is a powerful limitation of participatory administration.

- (3) Party politics stands in the way of participative administration. The leaders of the political parties are simply interested in capturing political power through the majority system. They are not interested in educating people in political affairs which, in political sociology, is called political socialisation. The absence of political socialisation is not only the characteristic feature of transitional states but also of developed states.

In the presidential election of America more than 40% voters do not cast their votes. If this is the situation how can we expect a successful participative administration and good governance? Mere participation can never achieve these two. Judicious and spontaneous participation can bring about good governance and participation in administrative processes. This is the biggest handicap.

- (4) Even today in many countries women do not enjoy equal rights with men. This form of inequality between men and women cannot assure the success of good governance and participatory administration. In USA for pretty long time the Negroes were deprived of certain basic rights. The British women got their right to vote in the late 1920s. The people of many countries of Asia and Africa have not yet certain fundamental rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the UN in 1948 has not been able to make arrangements so that every citizen can get basic rights. This frustrating picture does not offering any augur for a hopeful participatory administration.
- (5) There is another problem and this can be looked from the Marxist point of view. If there are gross economic inequalities among various sections of society the declaration of basic rights cannot help the have-not's of the society and participation in public administration will remain beyond their reach. The participatory public administration will appear to them as myth. If participation remains beyond their reach can good governance be a reality? So we conclude that participatory administration, good governance, political and social as well as economic structure of society are closely interlinked. I strongly believe that both good governance and participative administration are overarching in nature. Even in developed capitalist societies the public administrators have failed to achieve these two.

Conclusion

Participatory administration and good governance as ideas are quite attractive. But in practical field these two still remain as lofty ideals. Modern public administration is highly complex and naturally people have very little or even no scope to participate and ensure good governance. In the age of globalisation the public administration of a particular state is not detached from the rest of the world. If we look at the world situation we shall find very few multinational corporations, non-governmental organisations and the Bretton Woods Institutions are practically controlling the world economy and they are doing it in favour of the highly developed countries of the First World.

Even the role of the nation-state has considerably shrunk. Both the printing and electronic media are engaged in propagating the ideas and objectives of MNCs and NGOs. The highly exaggerated propaganda has enough power to befool the common people. In many developing nations the administration or governance is dwindling or in a "moribund" (to use the phrase of V.I. Lenin) situation, people's participation and good governance are simply wishful thinking.

Notwithstanding, we hope that we should strive continuously to achieve both good governance and participatory public administration, because these are our goals —these are our ideals. During the last one hundred years and more the federal administration of USA is continuously making efforts to make

public administration pro-people, pro- development, pro-good governance and pro-democratic. But the grim picture that has come out of these efforts is that success is yet to come and nobody knows if it will come at all or not!

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