
UNIT 7 GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES AND CHANGING ROLE OF BUREAUCRACY*

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7.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you should be able to :

- Trace the emergence of the concept of governance;
- Put forth the different interpretations of the concept of governance;
- Examine the characteristics of governance;
- Comprehend the challenges of governance; and
- Analyse the various dimensions pertaining to the changing role of bureaucracy.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The concept of ‘governance’ has a long and distinguished pedigree. From the Greek city-state to the modern nation-state, governance or the art of governing has been a constant preoccupation for rulers and political philosophers. In recent years, the idea ‘governance matters’ has become a global theme. In the 1990s, aid donors and a range of international institutions, including the multilateral development banks, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), formally adopted ‘governance’ agenda.

Governance has only recently entered the standard Anglophone Social Science lexicon and become a ‘buzzword’ in various lay circles. Even now its social scientific usages

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are often ‘pre-theoretical’ and eclectic; lay usages are just as diverse and contrary. When most of the people hear the word “governance” they think of “government”, since, both have ‘govern’ as their root word. But governance is more than just government.

In this Unit, we shall orient you to various aspects pertaining to the concept of governance, bring out the emerging challenges in the arena of governance and examine the changing role of bureaucracy in the present scenario.

7.2 CONCEPT OF GOVERNANCE: GENESIS

The concept of governance is not new to India. Early discussions go back to at least 400B.C. to the *Arthashastra*, a fascinating treatise on governance attributed to Kautilya. In *Arthashastra*, Kautilya presented key pillars of the ‘art of governance’, emphasising justice, ethics, and anti-autocratic tendencies. He further detailed the duty of the king to protect the wealth of the State and its subjects; to enhance, maintain and also safeguard such wealth, as well as the interests of the subjects.

The government as an instrument of the State has always been the sole provider of goods and services. For example, Indian Airlines used to be the only agency for domestic air travel in India. Similar is the case in many areas such as telecommunications, power and so on. But since 1980s, we find the emergence and active part being played by the private sector in service delivery. Also we have civil society or people’s associations playing a key role.

For the last few decades, governance has been a prominent area in public administration. It was Harlan Cleveland who first used the word ‘governance’ as an alternative to the phrase public administration. In the mid-1970s, one of the themes in Cleveland’s particularly thoughtful and provocative speeches, papers, and books was: “What the people want is less government and more governance” (1972). Since Cleveland’s initial conception, it would be only a slight exaggeration to say that governance has become the subject formerly known as public administration. A further shift in the concept of governance was witnessed when the prefix “good” was added to it, making it a qualitatively ‘positive’ concept.

Ever since 1989, when the World Bank described the current situation in Africa as ‘crisis in governance’, the term ‘governance’ has been widely, if not exclusively associated with the politics of development in the post-colonial world. The term ‘governance’ had gained prominence with the usage of the term by the international donor agencies such as the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) etc. These institutions drew attention to certain deficiencies in the governance system of the developing countries. These included non-availability of information to the people, lack of accountability, poor management of public sector, absence of appropriate legal framework and so on. It is against this background that the concept of governance emerged to ensure effective and accountable management of the affairs of a country at all levels.

Gradually the concept of ‘good governance’ was authenticated and popularised by the World Bank. Through its reports published around three decades ago, ‘Governance’ has become an acknowledged paradigm, slowly replacing the notion of ‘Government’.

We are moving from governing almost exclusively by the formal ‘government’ to ‘governance’, which is broader in nature comprising government, private sector and civil society. The distinction between public and private sectors is getting narrowed and more participative and collaborative forms of governing are in place. We have already discussed in detail about these aspects in Unit 2 of this Course.

7.3 GOVERNANCE: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual roots of governance are located in the neo-liberal theoretical discourses. Governance like New Public Management defies simple definitions. It has become a conceptual riddle. Semantically, it refers to government-run-administration. However given its roots in the concern of the World Bank for recovering 'loans' given to the Sub-Saharan African states, it has become integrally linked with the 'neo-liberal' thrust in contemporary politics. The neo-liberal thinking gained prominence since mid-1950s which advocated free market. It gave importance to private sector, individual liberty and freedom and propagated roll back of the State. It favoured free markets and diluting the role of the Welfare State.

Governance generally means 'the act or process of governing'. Since 1980s, the shift from 'government' to 'governance' in development vocabulary was not mere semantic change. The Anglophone term 'governance' can be traced to the classical Latin and ancient Greek words for the 'steering of boats'. It originally referred mainly to the action or manner of governing, guiding or steering conduct and overlapped with 'government'. For a long time usage was mainly limited to the Constitutional and legal issues concerning the conduct of 'affairs of State'.

It has enjoyed a remarkable revival over the last few decades in many contexts, however becoming a ubiquitous 'buzzword' which can mean anything or nothing. The key factor in its revival has probably been the need to distinguish between 'governance' and 'government'. The State attempts to achieve set goals and objectives for the welfare of its citizens. The government as an instrument of the State through the plans, policies and programmes attempts to deliver essential services to the citizens. Governance would refer to the modes and manner of governing from government to other institutions and agents charged with governing including private sector, civil society and peoples' associations.

Etymologically, the word "governance" and its cognates are rooted in the Greek word "kybernan", meaning "to steer or pilot a ship" and have been common in Western usage – originating in Middle English and Old French - for centuries. To "govern" is to direct, guide, rule, or steer. The institutions for governing may be termed – "government". When one is "governing", or being governed, one is engaged in, or being subjected to, the act or process of "governance". In contemporary popular usage, governance refers to how actors – whether multinational entities, governments, public agencies, private corporations, communities, social or political groups, individuals, or combinations of these – are governed, i.e., directed or guided, in order to accomplish purposes on which they agree or have in common. By implication, governance in this generic sense might imply such descriptive characteristics or qualities as adaptability, transparency, means for resolving conflicts, structures for consultation, deliberation, and decision making, processes through which authority and influence are distributed among actors, and mechanisms for enforcing rules and agreements.

Governance refers to opening up of the arena of government to multiple actors, mobilising the collective efforts of the government, private sector and the community. It focuses on ensuring accountability, people's participation, and transparency, rule of law, effectiveness and efficiency. It fosters networking amongst several stakeholders and involves multiple actors and institutions.

In general there has been an ever-expanding, often confusing variety of meanings and applications of the term 'governance'. New definitions of governance have continued to proliferate in academic and policy discourse. These new, non-generic definitions

reflect increased scholarly and policy maker interest in how multiple sources of societal and global change – political, economic, social, demographic, technological, and legal – are affecting systems of ordered rule, especially, those, systems or arrangements serving public interests.

Beginning in the early 1990s, altogether new meanings began to be associated with the term “governance” in public administration. Governance, for example, began to mean a form of public goods provision that is “beyond government”. That is, “governance” meant, not just systems of both public and private sectors, but arrangements whereby responsibility for collective benefits has been assumed by civil society institutions such as non-profit/non-governmental organisations or other actors that are constituted, i.e., legitimised, outside the public sector. At the same time, among institutions concerned with the developing world and with newly emerging states, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, governance increasingly came to imply “good governance”, that is, government that meets specific criteria for competence, such as transparency, effectiveness, honesty, participation and inclusivity.

Over the past decades, distinct words and phrases for reforming the public sector have been in usage. The ‘3Es’ of economy, efficiency and effectiveness gave way to the ‘new public management’ and ‘entrepreneurial government’. The term *Governance* is now widely used, supplanting the commonplace ‘government’. Even the most cursory inspection reveals that ‘governance’ has several distinct meanings. The current use does not treat governance as a synonym for government. Rather it signifies a change in the meaning of government, referring to a new process of governing; or a changed condition of ordered rule; or the new method by which society is governed.

Lynn (2010) categorises the meanings and applications in the governance literature and the issues each raises for the study and practice of public administration as:

- a) governance as a generic term
- b) governance as synonymous with the state, with the public sector: “government”;
- c) governance as synonymous with “*good* government”
- d) governance “*beyond* government”
- e) governance “*not* government”

Rhodes (1996) puts forward six separate uses of governance as:

- a) the minimal state
- b) corporate governance
- c) good governance
- d) a socio-cybernetic system
- e) self-organizing networks.
- f) the new public management,

The notion of governance rests on three theoretical principles or premises:

- a) The existence of crisis of governability
- b) That this crisis reflects problems in traditional forms of State intervention.
- c) The emergence of a tendency or of a convergent political trend in all the ‘developed’ countries that is giving rise to a new form of governance better adapted to the context.

There are varied interpretations of governance put forth by scholars implying

- Shift from the bureaucratic State to the hollow State or to third-party government
- Market based approaches to government
- Development of social capital, civil society, and high levels of citizen participation
- Interjurisdictional cooperation and network management.

Government in the postmodern State involves multiple levels of interlocked and overlapping arenas of collective policy implementation. Governments now operate in the context of supranational, international, trans-governmental and trans-national relations in elaborate patterns of federated power sharing and interdependence.

7.4 QUALITY OF GOVERNANCE

Today the quality of governance is attracting more and more attention among the countries. The number of democratic regimes continues to rise and good governance has become an important criterion for a country's credibility and respect on the international stage. The use of the term "good governance" was initially articulated in a 1989 World Bank publication. Therein, the concept of good governance was identified as a structural necessity for market reform. In 1992, the Bank published a Report entitled, *Governance and Development*, which explored the concept further and its application to the Bank's activities. In 1997, the Bank redefined the concept and underlined the need for an effective State apparatus in association with "good governance" as a necessary precondition for development. Other international financial institutions (IFIs), such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), have also contributed to the World Bank's policy dialogue.

Since 'good' is a subjective term, it is important to be specific in its use. There are many competing views on what the term 'good governance' should mean, but most donors argue that it should include some (if not all) of these; increased public accountability and transparency; respect for and strengthening of the rule of law and anti-corruption measures; democratisation, decentralisation and local government reform; increased civil society participation; and respect for human rights and the environment.

Good governance has certain qualities to it. It promotes equity, participation, pluralism, transparency, accountability and the rule of law. And it is efficient, effective, responsive and sustainable over the long run. Governance must be rooted in these principles for greater human development through poverty eradication, environmental protection and regeneration, gender equality and sustainable livelihoods.

When we speak of the quality of a country's governance, however, we mean the degree to which its institutions and processes are transparent, accountable to the people, allowing them to participate in decisions that affect their lives. The quality pertains to structure, systems and processes of governance. We have already referred to this in Unit 3 of this Course.

The promotion of good governance has led to the proliferation of aggregate indicators that rank or assess countries for the quality of their governance. The most comprehensive set of aggregate indicators is the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) database now covering 215 countries and territories; and measuring three dimensions of governance defined as "the exercise of authority through formal and informal traditions and institutions for the common good". The three dimensions are:

**Governance :
Emerging
Perspectives**

- 1) the process of selecting, monitoring, and replacing governments;
- 2) the capacity to formulate and implement sound policies and deliver public services;
- 3) the respect of citizens and the State for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answers.
ii) Check your answers with those given at the end of the Unit.

- 1) Explain the genesis of the concept of ‘governance’.

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- 2) Discuss the conceptual dimensions of governance.

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7.5 CHALLENGES OF GOVERNANCE

There is a multitude of challenges facing ‘governance’ in the twenty-first century. This is very true for most developing nations, especially in Asia. These challenges emanate from various levels-global, national, regional and local. While many challenges have local solutions because they involve local issues (e.g., flood control, population density, urban–rural divide, urban governance and administration, or public management), others have multiple sources involved, especially regional and global ones and demand national and international solutions. This has an imperative for regional and global cooperation.

The challenge of governance in any State is not competitive populism or fulfilment of some wish lists. It is in restoring the basic values to the institutions and ensuring their sustenance through truly autonomous watch dog processes. The legislators should legislate and exercise supervision of government policies; the executive should concentrate on fair and equitable governance and efficient delivery of public services. The judiciary should focus on speedy justice for all sections of the society.

The environment of public administration in developing democracies has changed dramatically in the last few decades. The contemporary challenges of governance in India are: problems with bureaucracy, including the antiquated processes and criteria for recruitment of the nation’s higher civil service, rigidity and inefficiencies in government operations, widespread corruption, lack of accountability, lack of representativeness in

public service, unresponsiveness to citizens, and the inability of the bureaucracy to deal with the growing role of the private sector and civil society in governance. In 1991, India liberalised its markets, privatised several government-owned industries and became more open to globalisation. These reforms have created a radical change in the Indian political and economic system as well as unprecedented challenges for governance. On the one hand, liberalisation and globalisation have produced greater wealth, a larger middle class and modernisation in India; on the other hand, they have created a tremendous and urgent need for public administration reforms, infrastructure development and reduction of the widening gap between the rich and the poor. The problems of a developing democracy; a governance system that is undergoing major changes that at times appears chaotic and an administrative apparatus that suffers from much pathology. The change is slow and requires simultaneous and coordinated efforts on the part of the country's social, political and economic institutions.

Throughout the world, governance issues have become increasingly crucial in recent years in all sectors and at all organisational levels – social, economic, cultural, administrative and political. Globalisation has profoundly altered and intensified communication and dialogue on issues pertaining to the manner in which communities, societies, nations and the world are governed. The current economic situation, marked by growing economic tensions and budget austerity, renders the invention or reinvention of systems of governance much more vital – but also politically delicate.

Some of the contemporary issues and challenges of governance can be summed as:

- Political, economic and social systems have become increasingly fragmented, making global strategic initiatives even more complex;
- The range of values, attitudes and behaviours exhibited by individuals and groups has contributed to greater and more diverse demands for inclusion and participation on the part of citizens, groups and organisations;
- As the structure around the representation of interests is further broadened and differentiated, the governance system becomes more complex and progressively less intelligible, decipherable and accountable to lay persons;
- There is a growing risk that the democratic quality of our political systems will deteriorate.

Key Challenges of Governance

- **Information gap:** characterised by information asymmetries between levels of government when designing, implementing and delivering public policy.
- **Capacity gap:** arises when there is a lack of human, knowledge (skill-based and “knowhow”) or infrastructural resources available to carry out tasks, regardless of the level of government.
- **Fiscal gap:** reflects the difference between sub-central revenues and the expenditures needed to meet their responsibilities. It indicates a direct dependence on higher levels of government for funding in order to meet obligations.
- **Administrative gap:** arises when administrative borders do not correspond to functional economic areas at the sub-central level.
- **Policy gap:** results when line ministries take purely vertical approaches to cross-sectoral policy (e.g. energy, water or youth).

7.6 CHANGING ROLE OF BUREAUCRACY

The impact of globalisation on State is manifold and it is resulting in transformation in the role of bureaucracy. The State is to act as a linking pin of processes of planning, consultation, negotiation and decision-making involving diverse actors-state as well as non-state at different levels of governance. The State is the hub of activities connecting multiple partners and stakeholders from various spheres. In consonance with this, the bureaucracy's role is also undergoing change. Research Studies indicate that there are reform measures initiated globally to streamline the size and scope of bureaucracy, and make them attuned to coping with market forces and citizen's voice. According to Haque(1998), the role of bureaucracy is changing from a) developmental to managerial role b) active(leading) to supportive (facilitating) c) citizen-centred to customer-centred. The terms bureaucracy and democracy are usually thought of, in the academic literature, as antithetical approaches to providing governance for a society. On the one hand public bureaucracies are typically conceptualised as necessary for effective administration of public programmes, but as being legalistic and largely indifferent to the wishes and demands of individual citizens. Bureaucracies also tend to be associated with hierarchical and even authoritarian forms of governing, even though at least part of the logic for institutionalising the bureaucratic form of governing was to ensure equal treatment of citizens, and to provide clients with records and justifications for the decisions being made about them within the public sector.

The nature of governance has been changing with shift from a system that is focused on inputs to one that is focused on outputs. This is perhaps inevitable given that a good deal of the reform of the public sector under New Public Management has been concerned with managing the output of programmes. Performance management in particular has emphasised the need to measure what the public sector does. A part of that measurement relates to citizen satisfaction with the services provided, a form of assessment that invites public participation and can serve as one form of democratic input, though perhaps a rather passive one. This change in turn implies that accountability has become an even more central instrument for democracy. The bureaucracy thus, has become an important locus for public involvement and for democracy.

Effective and efficient institutions form the backbone of a successful governance system. The bureaucracy plays a central role in socio-economic development and nation building. In the recent times, the role of bureaucracy has undergone a massive change due to a number of factors. The changing role of the State in the contemporary context has brought about significant changes in the profile of bureaucracy. The growing impact of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation, increased complexity in administrative problems, influx of information technology and socio-cultural upheavals are bringing in a lot of changes in the complexion of Indian bureaucracy. Consequently, there have been persistent demands for a responsive, accountable and efficient administration. The bureaucracy has to strike a balance between participation and accountability, competition and conflict, user and citizen. The bureaucracy has to ensure that there is a suitable environment in which rights of the citizens are protected, law and order is maintained, stability is provided and efficient infrastructure is put in place to tone up the welfare services to the people.

There are several governance challenges in India on political and socio-economic fronts. In addition there are regional disparities, issues pertaining to centre-state relationship and so on. The bureaucracy in India suffers from certain paradoxes. It is a combination of rigid adherence to procedures and a low resistance to varied pressures, pulls and interventions.

Bureaucracy is the backbone of Indian administrative system. Its complexion is changing with the change in the socio-cultural and economic scenario. The governance scenario around is changing under the rubric of New Public Management (NPM) and good governance reforms where more emphasis is on making bureaucracy more transparent, efficient and accountable. The responsibilities, the regulatory and service functions of bureaucracy are on increase. It is expected to play the role of knowledge manager to meet the contemporary governance challenges.

The role of bureaucracy varies at different levels. At the top level in governance structure, tasks of bureaucracy relate to policy formulation and devising appropriate implementation strategies. The bureaucracy at the middle level is to discharge tasks of supervising, coordinating, networking and communicating and overseeing the implementation and execution. It requires a blend of administrative, technical, and human skills. At the cutting edge level, the bureaucracy has to be proactive, innovative and entrepreneurial to deliver the services.

In nutshell, the shift or change in the role of bureaucracy in light of the emerging governance challenges can be understood under the following factors:

- Fast pace of globalisation
- Rapid advancement of communication technology and problems relating to cybercrime and threats due to social media
- Advances in technology and mass-scale digitisation of government operations
- New tools of governance
- Inclusive policies with a more sense of accountability and responsibility towards the excluded sections of society
- Participatory and engaged governance i.e., engaging the civil society for better governance since citizens are the most important assets in governance
- Building new skills and capacities
- Internal and external security threats

The bureaucracy's role is multifaceted being the:

- Articulator and integrator of interests of stakeholders
- Conciliator, mediator and adjudicator
- Contributor of expertise, skills and resources
- Network and strategic manager
- Responsive, accessible and promoter of multidimensional accountability

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answers.

ii) Check your answers with those given at the end of the Unit.

1) Identify the key issues and challenges of governance.

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2) Describe the factors responsible for changing role of bureaucracy.

7.7 CONCLUSION

In the new governance context, role of bureaucracy has been changing very fast. The government is no longer seen merely as a law enforcer or a controller of national resources but as a provider of basic services and public goods. Globalisation has added different dimensions to the concept of governance. There has been a shift in orientation from being controllers to facilitators and from being providers to enablers. Bureaucrats will have to equip themselves with the new set of skills and capabilities to meet the new governance challenges. They need to master new technologies and new styles of functioning and devise strategies to deal with the emerging governance challenges. Thus, in the light of the changing governance scenario, the bureaucracy must reform itself. It must reinvent itself in the light of changing norms of governance, New Public Service and New Governance.

7.8 GLOSSARY

Entrepreneurial Government : It is philosophy that propagates government institutions to be competitive, innovative and risk taking like private enterprises.

Governance Indicators : These are the set of composite indicators covering various dimensions of governance for measuring the quality of governance within and across the nations.

Neo-liberal Thought : This is associated with economic liberalisation policies such as deregulation, privatisation, free trade, increasing the role of private sector in economy and society.

New Public Management : This refers to private sector and market driven perspective on the operations of the government. It is a combination of various methods and techniques towards modernising of government activities.

New Governance : This is a new paradigm in the governance discourse and features the changing locus of the public authority involving the expanding role of the civil society in the provision of public benefits.

New Public Service : This approach put forth by Robert B. Denhardt and Janet B. Denhardt suggests that public servants must adhere to law, community values, political norms, professional standards and citizens' interests. It considers the primary role of bureaucracy to serve the citizens.

Social Capital : It refers to networks of relationships among people in society. It encompasses factors such as interpersonal relationships, a shared sense of identity, shared understanding, shared norms, values, trust, cooperation and reciprocity.

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7.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Your answer should include the following points:
 - The term governance is derived from the Greek word *kybernan* which implies steering.
 - Shift from government to governance narrative.
 - It is more than government.
- 2) Your answer should include the following points:
 - The characteristics of good governance include:
 - a) Participation
 - b) Rule of Law
 - c) Transparency
 - d) Responsiveness
 - e) Equity
 - f) Effectiveness and efficiency
 - g) Predictability
 - h) Accountability

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Your answer should include the following points:
 - Fragmented political, economic and social systems
 - Challenges of globalisation
 - Revolution in information technology
 - Policy gap
 - Information gap
 - Fiscal gap
 - Administrative gap
- 2) Your answer should include the following points:
 - Improving the functioning of civil service and bureaucracy.
 - Development of new capacities in view of governance challenges.
 - Engaging citizens in governance.