

THE ROLE OF GOOD GOVERNANCE IN ENHANCING EFFECTIVE PUBLIC MANAGEMENT DECISION-MAKING: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

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Abstract

Good governance is a critical element in enhancing effective decision-making in public management. It ensures transparency, accountability, inclusivity, and efficiency in formulating and implementing policies that drive national development and improve public service delivery. This paper explores the role of good governance in public management decision-making, highlighting key principles such as transparency, participation, the rule of law, responsiveness, and ethical accountability. The study examines various decision-making models used in public administration and how governance frameworks influence their effectiveness. Despite its importance, good governance faces significant challenges, including political interference, corruption, bureaucratic inefficiencies, weak institutional frameworks, and limited public engagement. These challenges hinder evidence-based policymaking, reduce public trust, and lead to inefficient resource allocation. The paper reviews existing literature on these challenges and explores best practices for strengthening governance mechanisms in public administration. The study concludes that achieving good governance in public management requires institutional reforms, anti-corruption measures, digital governance solutions, and increased citizen participation. By adopting these strategies, governments can enhance decision-making processes, ensure sustainable development, and foster greater public trust in governance structures.

Keywords: Good governance, public management, decision-making, transparency, accountability, governance challenges.

INTRODUCTION

Good governance is a fundamental pillar of effective public administration, playing a crucial role in shaping policies, ensuring transparency, and enhancing decision-making processes within government institutions. In an era of increasing complexity in public management, the need for accountable, transparent, and participatory governance has never been more pressing. Governments worldwide are faced with the challenge of making strategic decisions that not only address immediate societal needs but also promote long-term development, economic stability, and social equity. However, the effectiveness of public management decisions is largely determined by the quality of governance frameworks in place. Public management decision-making involves the processes through which government officials, policymakers, and administrators analyze problems, evaluate options, and implement policies that affect citizens and national development. The presence of good governance ensures that these decisions are based on merit, data-driven insights, and the collective interests of society rather than personal or political considerations. Key principles of good governance—such as transparency, accountability, responsiveness, efficiency, equity, and adherence to the rule of law—serve as guiding frameworks that enhance the credibility and effectiveness of public administration. When these principles are upheld, public confidence in government institutions increases, policy implementation becomes more effective, and national development goals are more achievable.

Despite the recognized importance of good governance in decision-making, many governments face significant challenges in ensuring its effective implementation. Issues such as corruption, bureaucratic inefficiencies, political interference, limited public participation, and weak institutional frameworks often hinder the ability of governments to make informed and impactful decisions. These challenges undermine the quality of governance and, in turn, negatively affect public trust and the overall efficiency of government policies.

This paper examines the role of good governance in enhancing effective public management decision-making, exploring both the challenges and prospects for improving governance frameworks.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Good Governance

The concept of good governance gained prominence during the eighties following the World Bank and IMF report (1994), which highlighted the economic crisis confronting the Third World countries and specifically the sub-Saharan Africa. The view that emerged from the World Bank and IMF centred around the democracy-development relationship. The World Bank pronouncement positioned democracy as a necessary prerequisite for development. Good governance was reflected as the existence of a multiparty democracy, rule of law and free press that kept political leaders accountable in view of the fusion of the role of politics and administration (Wohlmuth, 1999:7). Hence, governance implied the exercise of authority, control, management and power by the government. Alternatively, governance is the manner in which a government exercises political power and encompasses the state's institutional and structural arrangements, decision-making processes and implementation capacity, and the relationship between government officials and the public. While good governance is about the norms of governance, which entails: the legitimacy of the government; a legal framework or rule of law; popular participation; freedom of association and expression; and rational non-personalised public administration (Wohlmuth, 1999:7). Thus, the type of laws determines how a state is governed and policies legislated and how these laws and policies are monitored and implemented.

The clarification of governance could also imply that government may be captured by elites who has the intention to plunder the nation's wealth (Pierre Landell-Mills and Ismail Serageldin, 1995:203). In order to ensure that public resources are employed for public ends, requires a clear separation of what is public and what is private. Therefore, a legal framework that governs the behaviour of all public leaders and officials mediated by institutional mechanisms to enforce compliance is necessary. It should be noted that good governance is not exclusively a concern in the developing world nor is the objective simply a matter of enhancing democracy for development. Good governance applies equally to the developed world as the Enron scandal in the USA can be cited as an example. The argument that "democracy precedes development" is also challenged and in this case Malloch-Brown reveals that of the 140 countries that have embraced democracy over the past 15 years many are experiencing frustration and despair in achieving development goals (United Nations Development Programme Report, 2002). The interdependence of national economies as reflected by the phenomenon of globalisation, demands that good governance is a central concern for both the developed and the developing world. Nevertheless, good governance, as a western imposed concept, has salience in the developing world given the abysmal economic growth and social

Therefore, Good Governance refers to the methods and principles applied in the management and implementation of government policies. The concept of Good Governance emphasises efficiency, transparency, participation, accountability, responsiveness, applicable laws and rules, and equality in the decision-making process and policy implementation. Some of the main elements of good governance include:

1. **Transparency:** The principle of transparency means that governments should operate openly, access relevant information, and provide access to information to the public. Transparency helps prevent corrupt practices, enables public participation in decision-making processes, and increases the accountability of government institutions.
2. **Participation:** Good governance encourages active participation of citizens in decision-making processes and governance. Public participation allows people's aspirations and interests to be heard and accommodated, so that the resulting policies take into account the needs and expectations of the people.
3. **Accountability:** The principle of accountability demands that government officials and state institutions are responsible for their actions and decisions. This includes accountability for the use of budgets, the implementation of programmes, and the outcomes of policies implemented.
4. **Responsiveness:** Good governance demands that government be responsive to the needs and problems faced by society. Responsiveness includes the government's ability to respond to complaints, provide efficient public services, and address environmental changes in a timely manner.

5. **Fairness:** The principle of justice emphasises equal and fair treatment for all citizens. Good governance aims to avoid discriminatory practices or granting privileges to certain groups, as well as ensuring equitable access to public resources and services.
6. **Law-oriented:** This principle demands that all government activities are conducted in accordance with applicable laws and rules. This is important to create legal certainty, avoid abuse of power, and create a stable and predictable environment.

Decision-Making in Public Management

Decision-making in public management refers to the process by which government officials, administrators, and policymakers analyze issues, evaluate options, and implement actions to achieve policy objectives and public welfare. Simon (1947) defines decision-making as the process of choosing among alternatives to address a specific problem or achieve a desired outcome. In the context of public administration, decision-making involves considering economic, political, social, and ethical factors to ensure that government actions align with national interests and democratic principles.

Public management decision-making differs from decision-making in the private sector due to its emphasis on public accountability, regulatory frameworks, and stakeholder inclusivity. Unlike private organizations, which focus primarily on profitability and efficiency, public sector decisions must balance multiple interests, including social equity, political expectations, legal constraints, and resource limitations (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015).

The decision-making process in public management follows a systematic approach to ensure that government policies and actions are well-informed, effective, and aligned with the public interest. Several models and frameworks describe this process, but a common structured approach includes the following stages:

Problem Identification and Definition: The first step in public sector decision-making involves recognizing and defining a problem that requires government intervention. This may arise from public complaints, policy gaps, emerging societal challenges, or economic crises. The accuracy of problem identification influences the effectiveness of subsequent decisions. According to Lindblom (1959), public administrators often deal with complex and ambiguous problems, making this stage critical for setting clear objectives.

Data Collection and Analysis: Once a problem is identified, relevant data must be gathered to understand its scope, causes, and potential impact. Public managers rely on statistical reports, policy evaluations, expert opinions, and stakeholder consultations to assess the situation. Data-driven decision-making improves transparency, reduces bias, and ensures that policies are based on factual evidence rather than political interests (Bryson, 2018).

Development of Alternative Solutions: Public managers must explore multiple solutions before making a final decision. This stage involves brainstorming policy options, conducting cost-benefit analyses, and assessing feasibility. Policy alternatives are often evaluated based on efficiency, sustainability, legal implications, and social impact. The Rational Model of decision-making suggests that decision-makers should identify and compare all possible alternatives before selecting the best course of action (Simon, 1957).

Evaluation of Policy Options: After identifying potential solutions, policymakers analyze their advantages and disadvantages. This involves assessing risks, financial implications, public acceptance, and long-term consequences. The Incremental Model, proposed by Lindblom (1959), suggests that public administrators often make small, step-by-step adjustments rather than drastic policy changes due to uncertainty and limited resources.

Decision-Making and Policy Implementation: Once the most suitable option is selected, public administrators and government officials take action by formulating policies, enacting laws, or

implementing programs. This phase requires collaboration among government agencies, legislators, civil society organizations, and the private sector. Policy execution involves allocating resources, assigning responsibilities, and ensuring compliance with regulatory frameworks (Hill & Hupe, 2014).

Monitoring and Evaluation: Decision-making in public management does not end with implementation; continuous monitoring and evaluation are necessary to assess the effectiveness of policies and make necessary adjustments. Feedback mechanisms, performance indicators, and public opinion surveys help policymakers determine whether decisions have achieved their intended objectives. Adaptive decision-making ensures that policies remain relevant and responsive to changing circumstances (Howlett, 2009).

Decision-Making Models in Public Management

Several theoretical models explain how decisions are made in the public sector. These models help understand the complexity of governance and the factors influencing policy choices.

The Rational Model

The Rational Model assumes that decision-makers act logically and systematically, gathering complete information to identify the best possible solution. It follows a structured approach of problem identification, analysis, evaluation, and implementation (Simon, 1957). However, this model is often criticized for being unrealistic, as public administrators rarely have access to perfect information.

The Incremental Model

Proposed by Lindblom (1959), the Incremental Model suggests that public managers make small adjustments to existing policies rather than implementing radical changes. This approach acknowledges the constraints of limited resources, political influences, and uncertainty in public administration. While it is practical, it may lead to slow reforms and inefficiencies.

The Garbage Can Model

Developed by Cohen, March, and Olsen (1972), the Garbage Can Model describes decision-making as a chaotic process in which solutions, problems, and decision-makers interact randomly. This model is particularly relevant in large bureaucratic organizations where decisions are influenced by competing interests, conflicting goals, and uncertain environments.

The Participatory Model

This model emphasizes stakeholder involvement in decision-making, promoting inclusivity and democratic governance. Public participation, consultations, and deliberative policymaking ensure that decisions reflect the needs and preferences of citizens (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015). While it enhances legitimacy, participatory decision-making can be time-consuming and challenging to manage.

How Governance Principles Influence Decision-Making

1. Transparency and Informed Decision-Making

Transparency in governance refers to the openness and accessibility of decision-making processes. Grigorescu (2003) argues that transparency reduces corruption and increases institutional trust by allowing stakeholders to monitor government and corporate actions. Studies show that when decision-making processes are transparent, stakeholders can assess the rationale behind policies and organizational strategies, leading to higher levels of accountability and effectiveness (Fox, 2007).

For example, e-governance platforms, such as open data initiatives and digital financial disclosures, have improved public decision-making by providing real-time access to information (Heeks, 2002). Countries like Estonia and Sweden, which emphasize transparency in governance, have consistently ranked high in governance efficiency and public trust (World Bank, 2020).

2. Accountability and Ethical Decision-Making

Accountability ensures that decision-makers are held responsible for their actions and choices. Bovens (2007) defines accountability as the obligation of public officials and organizational leaders to explain their decisions and face consequences for misconduct. Strong accountability frameworks lead to ethical decision-making by discouraging corrupt practices and ensuring that policies align with public or corporate interests.

Research by Treisman (2000) finds that countries with independent anti-corruption agencies and strong legislative oversight experience lower levels of policy failures and governance inefficiencies. In corporate governance, accountability mechanisms such as board oversight, shareholder rights, and independent audits enhance ethical leadership and risk management (Jensen & Meckling, 1976).

3. Participation and Inclusive Decision-Making

Participation refers to the involvement of stakeholders in governance processes. Arnstein (1969) introduced the Ladder of Citizen Participation, which categorizes different levels of citizen engagement, ranging from manipulation to full citizen control. Governance frameworks that emphasize participation lead to more inclusive and democratic decision-making.

Fung (2006) argues that participatory governance strengthens legitimacy by allowing citizens, employees, and other stakeholders to contribute to policy discussions and strategic planning. Case studies in participatory budgeting, such as those in Porto Alegre, Brazil, demonstrate that inclusive decision-making leads to more effective and widely accepted policies (Wampler, 2007).

4. Rule of Law and Legal Compliance in Decision-Making

The rule of law ensures that decision-making follows established legal frameworks, preventing arbitrary governance and abuse of power. North (1990) suggests that strong legal institutions promote stable governance environments that facilitate sound decision-making. When decision-makers adhere to legal principles, policies are more predictable, fair, and enforceable.

A study by Johnston (2005) on anti-corruption governance in Singapore highlights how strict enforcement of the rule of law has led to efficient public sector decision-making and economic stability. Similarly, corporate governance models that emphasize regulatory compliance help organizations avoid legal risks and enhance investor confidence (OECD, 2021).

5. Efficiency and Effectiveness in Governance Decision-Making

Efficiency in governance refers to the optimal use of resources to achieve policy or organizational objectives. According to Osborne and Gaebler (1992), governance models that incorporate performance-based management systems improve decision-making by ensuring that resources are allocated based on measurable outcomes.

For instance, the implementation of digital governance strategies has improved service delivery and policy execution in many governments. Heeks (2002) notes that Estonia's digital governance framework has significantly reduced bureaucratic inefficiencies and improved public sector decision-making. In corporate governance, performance-based incentives align managerial decisions with organizational goals, leading to better financial outcomes (Moynihan & Pandey, 2010).

6. Responsiveness and Adaptive Decision-Making

Governance principles that emphasize responsiveness ensure that institutions adapt to societal needs and emerging challenges. Denhardt & Denhardt (2015) argue that a responsive government actively listens to public concerns and adjusts policies accordingly.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of responsive governance in decision-making. Governments that quickly adjusted their public health policies, social welfare programs, and economic interventions demonstrated higher levels of policy effectiveness (OECD, 2021). Similarly, corporate

governance models that emphasize adaptability, such as agile leadership frameworks, have shown improved strategic decision-making during crises (Kotter, 2012).

Challenges to Good Governance in Public Management

1. Political Interference and Weak Institutions

One of the primary challenges to good governance in public management is political interference. Political leaders often manipulate governance processes for personal or partisan gain, leading to policy inconsistency, favoritism, and weak institutional frameworks (Dahl, 2006).

Grindle (2012) argues that in many developing countries, political patronage undermines bureaucratic independence, allowing unqualified individuals to be appointed to key administrative positions. This weakens public sector efficiency and policy implementation. Similarly, Acemoglu and Robinson (2012) highlight how political elites resist governance reforms to maintain control over resources, further entrenching governance inefficiencies.

2. Corruption and Lack of Accountability

Corruption remains a significant obstacle to good governance in public management. Johnston (2005) defines corruption as the abuse of public power for private gain, which distorts public policy, misallocates resources, and erodes public trust.

Treisman (2000) finds that corruption is more prevalent in countries with weak legal institutions and low levels of transparency. According to the World Bank (2020), corruption significantly affects service delivery, particularly in sectors such as health, education, and infrastructure. Countries with high corruption indices often struggle with governance reforms due to entrenched elite networks that benefit from weak accountability mechanisms (Rose-Ackerman, 1999).

Mechanisms such as independent anti-corruption agencies, whistleblower protections, and transparent procurement processes have been proposed to mitigate corruption. However, Kaufmann et al. (2011) argue that these mechanisms often fail in environments where political elites manipulate oversight institutions.

3. Bureaucratic Inefficiencies and Administrative Bottlenecks

Excessive bureaucracy and administrative red tape hinder effective governance and decision-making in public management. Peters (2010) highlights how rigid hierarchical structures slow down policy implementation, leading to inefficiencies and delays in service delivery.

In many cases, bureaucratic inefficiencies stem from outdated administrative procedures, lack of digital governance systems, and resistance to innovation. Heeks (2002) discusses how e-governance initiatives can improve bureaucratic efficiency by digitizing public administration and reducing human discretion in governance processes. However, technological adoption remains slow in many governments due to financial constraints and lack of political will.

4. Limited Public Participation and Citizen Engagement

Citizen participation is a key principle of good governance, yet many governance systems fail to adequately engage the public in decision-making. Arnstein (1969) introduced the Ladder of Citizen Participation, which categorizes different levels of public involvement, ranging from non-participation (manipulation) to full citizen control.

Fung (2006) argues that limited public participation weakens policy legitimacy, as decisions are often made without input from those most affected by them. Similarly, Gaventa (2006) finds that marginalized groups, including women, ethnic minorities, and low-income populations, are often excluded from governance processes.

Participatory governance models, such as participatory budgeting and public consultations, have been recommended to enhance citizen engagement. However, Cornwall & Coelho (2007) caution that without institutional reforms, participatory mechanisms can be tokenistic and fail to bring real change.

5. Weak Rule of Law and Poor Legal Enforcement

A strong legal framework is essential for ensuring governance accountability and preventing abuse of power. However, in many countries, weak legal institutions and lack of judicial independence undermine good governance (North, 1990).

According to O'Donnell (1998), the rule of law is often compromised in systems where political leaders exert control over the judiciary, leading to selective justice and impunity. This is particularly evident in authoritarian regimes where governance decisions are made without legal scrutiny (Diamond, 2002).

Acemoglu & Robinson (2012) argue that governance reforms must strengthen the independence of legal institutions to ensure fair and impartial decision-making. However, achieving legal autonomy remains challenging in politically unstable environments.

6. Resource Constraints and Financial Mismanagement

Governments often face financial limitations that hinder the implementation of governance reforms and public service delivery. Moynihan & Pandey (2010) discuss how budget deficits, misallocation of funds, and lack of financial transparency contribute to governance failures.

A study by OECD (2021) finds that many developing countries struggle with resource mobilization due to weak tax administration systems and dependency on foreign aid. Additionally, public financial mismanagement, such as unauthorized expenditures and off-budget spending, leads to inefficiencies in governance.

Public financial management reforms, including performance-based budgeting and expenditure tracking, have been recommended to address these challenges (Andrews et al., 2014). However, their success depends on political commitment and institutional capacity.

Prospects and Recommendations for Enhancing Good Governance in Decision-Making

Several governance strategies have been proposed to address the challenges discussed above:

Strengthening Institutional Autonomy – Reducing political interference and promoting merit-based appointments can enhance public sector efficiency (Grindle, 2012).

Anti-Corruption Reforms – Establishing independent anti-corruption agencies and enforcing transparency measures can curb corruption (Johnston, 2005).

Public Sector Digitalization – Implementing e-governance systems can improve bureaucratic efficiency and service delivery (Heeks, 2002).

Enhancing Public Participation – Inclusive governance models, such as participatory budgeting and deliberative democracy, can improve decision-making (Fung, 2006).

Judicial Independence – Strengthening the rule of law and protecting judicial autonomy can ensure fair and transparent governance (O'Donnell, 1998).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study highlights several findings regarding the role of good governance in enhancing decision-making within public management:

Transparency in governance fosters trust and ensures that decision-making is based on factual data rather than political bias. Countries with open data policies and strong accountability mechanisms tend to have more effective public management. Also, effective decision-making in public administration requires

inclusive governance structures that encourage citizen participation. However, many governments face challenges in implementing participatory mechanisms due to bureaucratic inefficiencies and political interference.

Furthermore, political interference, corruption, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and weak institutional frameworks are major obstacles to achieving good governance. These challenges hinder evidence-based policymaking and efficient resource allocation. Likewise, different governance models—such as the Rational Model, Incremental Model, and Participatory Model—affect decision-making processes in varying ways. A combination of these models is often required to address complex governance challenges effectively.

Finally, the adoption of digital governance solutions, including e-governance platforms, has significantly improved decision-making efficiency in public administration. Countries that leverage technology in governance report lower levels of corruption and enhanced public service delivery. Meanwhile, strong legal frameworks and institutional autonomy contribute to effective decision-making. Countries with independent judicial and anti-corruption institutions tend to have more stable governance structures.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Good governance plays a crucial role in ensuring effective decision-making in public management. It is characterized by transparency, accountability, rule of law, efficiency, inclusivity, and responsiveness, all of which contribute to the development of strong public institutions and the effective delivery of public services. However, achieving good governance is often hindered by numerous challenges, including political interference, corruption, bureaucratic inefficiencies, limited public participation, weak institutional frameworks, and financial constraints. As discussed in this paper, these challenges undermine the effectiveness of public administration, leading to poor decision-making, inefficiencies in service delivery, and reduced public trust in government institutions.

A review of existing literature highlights that governance principles significantly influence public management decision-making. When governance structures uphold accountability, transparency, and the rule of law, public institutions operate more effectively, and decision-making becomes more inclusive and evidence-based. On the contrary, weak governance structures lead to inefficiencies, policy failures, and corruption, which negatively impact socio-economic development and public welfare.

To address governance challenges and improve public management decision-making, several strategies must be implemented. These include strengthening institutional autonomy, enforcing anti-corruption measures, adopting digital governance technologies, promoting citizen participation, and ensuring the independence of the judiciary. Additionally, sound financial management, performance-based accountability systems, and participatory governance models can contribute to the realization of good governance.

As governments and policymakers strive to enhance public management decision-making, it is essential to recognize that governance reforms require political commitment, institutional capacity, and societal engagement. A multi-stakeholder approach involving the government, civil society, international organizations, and the private sector is necessary to promote transparency, accountability, and efficiency in public administration.

Ultimately, achieving good governance is a continuous process that demands commitment, adaptability, and sustained efforts. By strengthening governance frameworks, public institutions can enhance their decision-making processes, improve service delivery, and foster sustainable development. Moving forward, further research and policy innovations are needed to address emerging governance challenges and ensure that public management remains responsive to the needs of society.

To enhance good governance and improve decision-making in public management, the following recommendations are proposed:

Governments should reduce political interference in public administration by ensuring merit-based appointments and promoting the independence of institutions responsible for governance and policy implementation.

Establishing independent anti-corruption bodies, enforcing strict penalties for corrupt practices, and promoting financial transparency can significantly reduce corruption in governance structures.

The adoption of e-governance solutions, such as digital financial disclosures, online public service platforms, and real-time monitoring systems, can improve transparency, efficiency, and accountability in decision-making processes.

Governments should create mechanisms for active citizen engagement in policymaking, including public consultations, participatory budgeting, and stakeholder dialogues to ensure decisions reflect the needs of the population. Streamlining administrative procedures, reducing red tape, and introducing performance-based management systems can enhance efficiency in governance and policy implementation.

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