CONCEPT OF GOOD GOVERNANCE

BACKGROUND

The World Bank is said to have reinvented the concept of governance, in a different context, as a new approach to development. Globalization has resulted in generation of global pressures exerted by institutions such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), in the form of economic reforms programmes to be implemented by the developing countries. The aid given to these countries is accompanied by certain market-oriented reforms that is liberalization, privatization and globalization.

It has been observed that after a certain period of time, the results as expected out of this new thinking, have not been forthcoming or the growth has been slower than originally anticipated (expected). The failure of Structural Adjustment Programme, ineffective utilization of public funds, increasing corruption, the collapse of centrally planned economies, mounting fiscal debt etc. have raised critical questions about governance system. This has actually made the World Bank examine and publish its first major analyses based on the experience of Sub-Saharan Africa in 1989. The Bank published its document entitled “Sub-Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth”, which brought to light the key factors that thwarted the implementation of successful market-oriented reforms. Major factor was considered to be the failure of public institutions, which has been responsible for weak economic performance. As a result, the need for Good Governance was emphasized.

ORIGIN OF THE CONCEPT ‘GOOD GOVERNANCE’

For the first time, the concept of ‘Good Governance’ was formulated by the World Bank in 1992. It was defined as the “Manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country’s economic and social resources for development”. In the Report titled ‘Governance and Development’, Good Governance was considered central to creating and sustaining an environment, which fosters strong and equitable development and is an essential component of sound economic policies. Three distinct aspects of governance were identified:

1. Form of political regime (parliamentary, presidential, military or civilian)
2. Process by which authority is exercised in the management of a country’s economic and social resources; and
3. Capacity of governments to design, formulate and implement policies

The problems, faced especially by developing countries in the process of governance were highlighted. These include:

1. Improper implementation of laws
2. Delays in implementation of policies, programmes and projects
3. Lack of clarity about the rules, regulations to be adhered to by the private entrepreneurs
4. Absence of effective accounting system; and
5. Failure to involve beneficiaries and others affected in the design and implementation of projects leading to the substantial erosion of sustainability.

The World Bank outlined the need for Good Governance, which is necessary for economic, human, and institutional development. This was to be achieved through key governance activities and processes. Its conceptualization of Good Governance included:
1. Political accountability
2. Freedom of association and participation by different groups in the process of governance
3. An established legal framework based on rule of law and independence of judiciary to protect human rights, secure social justice, and guard against exploitation
4. Bureaucratic accountability with emphasis on openness and transparency in administration
5. Freedom of information and expression needed for formulation of public policies, decision-making, monitoring and evaluation of government performance
6. A sound administrative system leading to efficiency and effectiveness; and Co-operation between the government and civil society organizations.

In short, Good Governance as sound development management has four main dimensions: a) Public Sector Management, b) Accountability, c) Legal Framework for Development; and d) Transparency and Information Accessibility.

SIGNIFICANCE OF GOOD GOVERNANCE

Good Governance aims at enhancing the quality of life and entails governing processes which strive for maximum good for the maximum number of people through achieving Good its aims. It aims at:-

- Improving the quality of life of citizens
- Enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of administration Establishing the legitimacy and credibility of institutions Securing freedom of information and expression
- Providing citizen-friendly and citizen-caring administration Ensuring accountability
- Using Information Technology-based services to improve citizen-government interface
- Improving/enhancing the productivity of employees; and
- Promoting organizational pluralism – State, market and civil society organizations for governance.
- Good Governance, hence, relates to the quality of governance through attributes such as participation, empowerment, accountability, equity and justice.

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.
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.

CRITICISM OF GOODGOVERNANCE
George Frederickson, in his seminal paper “Whatever happened to Public Administration? Governance Governance’s Everywhere” challenges the validity and usefulness of the concept of governance, on five grounds.

1. First, much of the governance literature is a rehash of old academic debates and it is not clear whether something new is brought to the discipline of Public Administration.
2. Second, the concept, does not have an agreed upon meaning and is imprecise, wooly, and when applied, so broad that virtually any meaning can be attached to it.
3. Third, the concept of governance is freighted with values. Some models of governance reflect anti-bureaucratic and anti-governmental sentiments, while other models are deeply contextual, based on Constitutional, legal, organizational and political influences. This perspective on governance in public administration makes the subject both bigger and grander, a kind of un-public administration.
4. Fourth, scholars who use the word governance, particularly in Europe, claim that the concept is primarily about change, reforms and getting things right. Investment in the prevailing institutions, cities, states, nations and their established governments, as well as the accomplishment of the institutions, are devalued. Order stability and predictability are likewise undervalued. It is felt that despite the rhetoric of reforms governance is mostly about order and has politicians and bureaucrats adapt in orderly ways to changing circumstances and values. For example, most of elements of governance – networks, inter-organizational and inter-jurisdictional cooperation, power-sharing federations, public-private partnerships and contracting out are terms of institutional adaption in the face of increasing interdependence.
5. Fifth, governances often centered on non-state, institutions, both profit and for profit contracts, non-governmental organizations, parastatals, third parties etc. It is a general feeling amongst the
advocates for governance that there can be governance without government. But it is still the States and their sub-jurisdictions that deal with the vexing problems of race, poverty and justice.