**Governance matters**

[Zafar Ali Buledi](https://dailytimes.com.pk/writer/zafar-ali-buledi/%22%20%5Co%20%22More%20Articles%20by%20Zafar%20Ali%20Buledi)

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The governance matters and the quality of governance matters themost. More recently, prime minister Imran Khan while addressing a ceremony to sign “Performance Agreements of the Federal Government for the year 2020-21” stressed the need for the improved governance performance, and termed it as “a step in the right direction. But what contributes to an effective performance for the improved governance involves many factors.

There are myriad of challenges facing thecountry rangingfrom weakand strugglingeconomy, power crisis, price hike in daily commodities, belligerent posture of India against Pakistan, confrontation between the government and the opposition to thecovid 19 pandemic. These challenges are not without consequences, and a large number of people may feel thrown out of balance. However, the move by the present government towards improving the performance for better governance is laudable.For this, one can give credit to the prime minister for his strong support for this much needed initiative to improve governance.

The role and purpose of performance management is to give shape and direction how public sector organizations achieve desired outcomes. Primarily, it is a management style with the objective to set goals and to ensure achievements of such targets through a planning and control cycle to improve the overall governance. Traditionally, performance management thrusts on an “end-ways-means” model. According to this model, corporate objectives (ends) are determined first, and with those objectives in view, a strategy (ends) is formulated for achieving them. Lastly, comes the required resources (means).

There is need for a pragmatic governance performance management that may lead to coherence and stability for a greater public good and well-being despite host of social, economic and political issues

One of the key issues in the public sector organizations today is the steady decline and erosion of performance. The low performance is mostly attributed to the management style-and more often-compared with the growth and profitability of the private sector organizations which follow strategic planning and management model than its public sector counterpart. The effectiveness of strategic management and planning in the public sector is not much known due to challenges involved in designing and implementing, however, it has received increased interests and attention in public sector organizations.

As an important part of a planning and strategy, performance management tools are widely used   by various organizations. This move for change in the management style is mostly attributed to the introduction of New Public Management (NPM) in the public sector. The New Public Management, which is used to describe various reforms in the domain of public sector, is a broad and complex term. The basic premise for adopting this approach is to make public employees of an organization accountable in connection with organizational performance and   allows an organization to focus on its goals likely and incessantly leading towards achieving results.

However, the bearing of these practices tothe public sector   is a matter of debate as it is not easy to move strategically due to complexity in the governance system involving both political and administrative sphere. In contrast to private sector organizations, the public sector organizations are large and complex and also subject to internal and external environments. There are myriad of stakeholders in the public sector organization. The objectives are mostly driven and set by the public representatives who play a key role in fixing   priorities for the government. This leaves little discretion for the public sector organization than private one to follow its own strategic aims and objective. This limited discretion may involve certain constraints like political, legal and regulatory.

Likewise, the management in public sector environment is very challenging because of its unpredictability and, as it has evolved in political climate. Public servants experience contradictions, tensions and failures in implementing policies. There is need on the part of the government functionaries for good holistic understanding of the system they work in.

With this regard, and for it to be effective, the performance management system for achieving good governance should include, among other things, the following.

First, and the most important one, is the appointments on merit in all ministries, divisions and departments. The right man for the right job and at the right time is crucially important. The concept of pick and choose- my man- in the bureaucracy will have to be stopped conclusively and for good in all levels of public offices. It needs to be addressed appropriately and on time.

Second, with the national vision and clear road map, is the involvement of all stakeholders for inclusive governance by consensus to achieve national goals. This would put the animus (if any) on hold.

Third, following the established norms and procedures in decision making, is utilizing the institutional approach instead of personal one for making happen a structured and orderly governance, and to avoid wide division and disruption. This will provide a baseline of acceptability from all quarters for the government.

Fourth, is seeking sound solutions for conflicts and problems. This entails to value others opinion and listeningthem consistently in decision making process. It would dial down the temperature to do things in a better way.

Fifth, is the eradication of corruption-abuse of public office for private gain, and various forms of discrimination, corporatism, system of patronage, exchange networks, patrimonialism – through accountability across the board to ensuretransparency and fair play.

Establishing good governance does not happen overnight or by accident.  There is complexity in the public services having enormous storms and tides overly rigid approaches to performance management and strategic management can be highly dysfunctional in the public context. This takes further the articulation of a method of management practice that can cope with the stark realities of the complex and unpredictable public policy world. There is need for a pragmatic governance performance management that may lead to coherence and stability for a greater public good and well-being despite host of social, economic and political issues.

Without question, rethinking better governance has always been at the top of thegovernment agendas. But what drives the changes in this direction? Many factors.

*Studied Public Administration at the University of Brighton-UK, presently serving as provincial secretary in Government of Balochistan.*