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Improving Governance in Public Systems

C Achalender Reddy
Avik Chakraborty

Government agencies around the world are constantly innovating new ways of managing operations and rewarding people for innovative work. Put simply, public sector innovation involves creating, developing and implementing practical ideas that achieve a public benefit. These ideas have to be at least in part new and they have to be taken up for implementation rather than remaining simply as ideas. And, most important is that they have to be useful.

Innovations are both conceptual and perceptual, and, therefore, the innovators working in various public systems should look out, interact and listen to both the persons who are delivering and receiving the services. There is a need to study the expectations, values and especially the needs of the people to put in practice the innovative practices which have been found useful.

Definition of Innovation

Public systems tend to adopt innovations which enhance service delivery, increase efficiency and ensure cost reduction. An innovation in public systems can be defined as a process/policy intervention that

- Improves the public service delivery
- Enhances the efficiency of governance structure i.e. simplifying procedures etc.
- Improves citizen satisfaction
- Promotes transparency and accountability
- Reduces the time taken for service delivery
- Reduces the cost without affecting the efficacy and efficiency
- Leverages the use of technology

Types of Innovations

Innovations which exist in the public domain are often overlapping and are not restricted to a particular category. However, for a better understanding, innovations in public systems may be broadly categorised under the following heads:

Service Innovations– intend to introduce a new service, product or improvement in the quality of an

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existing service or product. **Bharat Interface for Money (BHIM)** is a mobile application developed by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) which enables e-payments directly through banks.

Service Delivery Innovations create a new or improved way of delivering specific public service to the citizens that aim at improving accessibility, targeting user needs more accurately, bringing in simplification of procedures etc.

Common Service Centres (CSCs) are the access points for delivery of essential public utility services, social welfare schemes, healthcare, financial, education and agriculture services, apart from a host of Business to Citizen (B2C) services to citizens in rural and remote areas of the country. It is a pan-India network catering to the regional, geographic, linguistic and cultural diversity of the country, thus enabling the Government's mandate of a socially, financially and digitally inclusive society.

Administrative/Organizational Innovations target to change the hierarchical structures and administrative routines in the Government

Electronic National Agriculture Market (e-NAM) is a Pan-India electronic trading portal launched in 2016 completely funded by the Central Government and implemented by Small Farmers' Agribusiness

Consortium (SFAC). It creates a national network of physical mandis which can be accessed online thus enabling buyers, situated even outside the State, to participate in trading at the local level.

Policy Innovations bring about the systemic culture of nurturing fresh ideas. Best practices that have a proven record of sustainability may be incorporated and be advocated as a policy. Drafting a policy for promotion of innovations itself is a policy innovation. This may include incentivising mechanism, identifying and appointing innovation officers in each Department etc. among others.

National Policy on Biofuels (2018) was first drafted by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy in 2009 but later was shifted to the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas in 2017 and was finally launched in 2018. The policy encourages the use of biofuels by extending appropriate financial incentives under various categories which results in reduced import dependency, a cleaner environment, employment generation etc. The role of twelve Ministries has been specified for effective implementation of biofuels programme in India.

Systemic Innovations employ new or improved ways of interacting with the citizens and engage them in service design which encourages a participative approach in governance and improves the magnitude of stakeholder consultation in decision making.

It is fair to conclude that innovations in public systems are indispensable and it is both a continuous process as well as a result. It is also a specific area of high importance where tools, methods and approaches are in constant evolution to facilitate identification, documentation and replication of innovations.

India Innovation Growth Program is a public, private partnership of the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India and Lockheed Martin Corporation. This initiative throws open a chance to the public to suggest innovative solutions to major societal problems.

Promoting Innovations in Public Systems

Understanding Opportunities and Problems

- Begins with a prompt or trigger including problems, failures

Digital India
Power To Empower
Common Services Centers Scheme (CSC)
Department of Electronics And Information Technology
Government of India
राष्ट्रीय ई-गवर्नेंस योजना
National e-Governance Plan
Public services closer home
CSC
e-GOVERNANCE SERVICES INDIA LIMITED
राष्ट्रीय ई-गवर्नेंस योजना
National e-Governance Plan
आधार
CSC
e-GOVERNANCE SERVICES INDIA LIMITED
Common Service Center
जन सेवा केन्द्र
COMMON SERVICES
Pan Card
Passport
Aadhar Card Services
Birth Certificate
Death Certificate
Jeevan Pramaan
Photostat/Scanning
Mobile/DTH Recharge
Apply Online Form
Air/Rail/Bus Reservation
etc..

and complaints which makes innovation either possible or necessary.

- Attuned to new trends, customer demands, data or technologies and innovations that are happening elsewhere.
- Emphasise better understanding of how people live their lives, and how services are used to help improve them.
- Find new insights into what people need, to end up with a clearly defined problem.

Generating and Sharing Useful Ideas

- Prioritise the areas of concern (e.g. health, education, infrastructure, water supply, sanitation, PDS etc.) which need to be addressed.
- Identify different types and sources of data, information and knowledge that are relevant.
- Channelise data, information and knowledge into a usable form so that it can be fully exploited to support evidence-based decision making.
- Share information collected with wider sets of actors.

Collaborating with Like-minded Stakeholders

- Identify and assess the importance of key people, group of people, or institutions.
- Define whom to involve in designing a multi-stakeholder process.
- Understand the role of multiple stakeholders who are likely to be involved in promoting innovation. These include both direct users who take action in implementing the initiative, and other individuals who will need to be involved in supporting initiative implementation (e.g. administrators, specialists, the staff of community agencies etc.).
- Describe the roles and responsibilities of those expected to support the long-term sustainability of innovations.
- Sensitise/build the capacities of relevant stakeholders to develop a culture of ownership and responsibility amongst them.

As the country has set out on the Swachh Bharat Mission, one of the major attributes is to end open defecation. ECOSAN, an initiative that is one of its kind, offers an economical and simple-to-use option in contrast to the conventional waste transfer methods where the human excreta and body wash water do not go waste.

- Create a knowledge repository that facilitates the availability of information in the public domain.

Documenting Innovations

While documenting an innovation, the following heads shall be covered

- Concept and Types of Innovations
- Skills and Tools Involved
- Learning based Monitoring and Evaluation System
- Processes and Linkages for scaling up
- Change in Practices
- Use of new knowledge/new use of existing knowledge

Potential Challenges

The following challenges are likely to be encountered while identifying, documenting and replicating innovations:

- Resource mobilisation
- Departmental silos and lack of convergence mechanism
- Fading away of the innovations due to a change in the personnel
- Lack of institutional memory
- Transfer of ownership
- Lack of domain expertise
- Internal animosity between different wings of Government/ Organization

Innovative Practices: High Potential for Adoption/Replication

Ecological Sanitation (ECOSAN)

As the country has set out on the Swachh Bharat Mission, one of the major attributes is to end open defecation. ECOSAN, an initiative that is one of its kind, offers an economical and simple-to-use option in contrast to the conventional waste transfer methods where the human excreta and body wash water do not go waste. The toilet is in daily use and never smells. The urine is collected in

a drum/pot outside the toilet for later use, and body wash water is used beneficially by diversion to the trees outside. ECOSAN toilets are much more helpful in flood-prone areas as it is completely sealed and would not result in overflow. And they are highly useful in drought-prone areas for being a remarkable alternative in the sustainable use of water. ECOSAN toilets reduce health risks due to contamination of drinking water by human waste; to prevent ground and surface water pollution, and to reuse the energy content within the human waste.

Use of Plastic Waste in Road Construction

Disposal of plastic waste is a serious concern in India and one technological approach developed by Prof. Rajagopalan Vasudevan has been found to be very useful in utilising plastic waste on a large scale. The salient feature of the whole process of constructing plastic roads is simple and easy and does not require any new machinery and industrial involvement. The utilisation of plastic waste to improve the properties of the bituminous mix offers a very promising alternative with its bulk and eco-friendly usage. The plastic roads ensure enhanced load carrying strength, water resistance, negligible maintenance cost and reduction of bitumen consumption by 10 per cent.

Urban Greening Activities by Kochi Metro Rail Limited

Kochi Metro Rail Limited (KMRL) is in the process of adding greenery to the infrastructure being created, thereby contributing to the enhanced green cover in and around Kochi. City dwellers have raised the demand for improving the greenery by the renovation of city parks and open spaces. KMRL, as a part of the environmental impact assessment report, has to compensate for the trees removed during the process of project implementation by planting trees in the ratio of 1:10. This will be complemented by the development of a green belt around the coach maintenance depot at Muttom and development of a green ribbon along the 25 Km stretch of the metro. In this way, KMRL will act as a catalyst for urban greening activities to reduce the carbon footprint.

Mother Tongue Based-Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE)

MTB-MLE is an approach to address the educational challenges faced by the indigenous population. In this approach, children start learning in their mother tongue in early grades with a gradual transition to a regional language and an international language. It contributes to 'quality education' as it facilitates the learning process, improves the ability to learn other languages and enables to strengthen the process of education by reaching out to grass-root levels.

Establishment of Vision Centres

Establishment of Vision Centres in rural villages with tele-ophthalmology connectivity with Base Hospitals is an effective model to reach patients who otherwise do not have access to quality eye care. Aravind Eye Care System in Madurai (Tamil Nadu) has successfully implemented this model covering a total population of over 3 million. This model makes eye care services available for the rural population at their doorsteps thus leading to a considerable reduction of the burden of cost and in preventing avoidable blindness. Most of the problems are addressed locally at the Vision Centres, and only a minuscule number of them are referred to either a secondary or a tertiary level hospital for further management. This considerably reduces the financial burden of patients by saving their expenditure on travel, food and lost wages.

Conclusion

CIPS, being a national body established by the Government of India in 2010 as an autonomous centre at ASCI, Hyderabad with a mandate to promote innovations in public systems, is working with Central Ministries, State Governments, Union Territories and Not-for-profit organizations to actively promote and disseminate practices which have resulted in enhanced service delivery, increased efficiency and cost reduction. CIPS also acts as a platform for sharing and disseminating knowledge on themes of critical importance.

It is fair to conclude that innovations in public systems are indispensable and it is both a continuous process as well as a result. It is also a specific area of high importance where tools, methods and approaches are in constant evolution to facilitate identification, documentation and replication of innovations.

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