

Module Detail	
Subject Name	Political Science
Paper Name	Public Policy, Governance and Indian Administration
Module Name/Title	Module : Welfare Policies: Challenges in Implementation
Pre-requisites	
Objectives	This module discusses in detail about the relevance of policies and evaluates the effect these policies create.
Keywords	Policy Design, Funds, Corruption, Policy Implementation, Challenges

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Welfare Policies: Challenges in Implementation

Objectives of the Module:

- Analyzing the relevance of policies
- Evaluating the impact or effect these policies create.

Introduction:

One can point at many achievement that India has attained, varying from the successful functioning of a multiparty democratic system to the emergence of a large scientific community and the development of industries but, India's overall success in promoting social opportunities has been quite limited. India's progress over the decades since independence, while far from the worst, has been substantially and systematically outclassed by many other developing countries.

Since independence, the Government of India has launched a number of Central Schemes, Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) and Community/Area Development Programmes in the areas of health & family welfare, education, employment & poverty eradication, agriculture, housing, safe drinking water, irrigation, transport, social welfare, etc. both in rural and urban

areas of the country. The main objectives of all these programs are to generate employment, improve quality of life, to remove poverty and economic inequality and human deprivation. Besides these, programs are also aimed at creation of basic infrastructure and assets essential for economic development.

Despite of all huge allocation made by Government of India, there is a general feeling that the development in basic infrastructure and amenities/facilities are not perceptible, especially in rural areas. Further, the standard of living of the people is still very poor and the employment opportunities to the young people are still considered to be very limited and inadequate. Therefore, in this paper the focus of the study will be to determine what are the challenges or the reasons that targeted goals or outputs of various policies are not achieved even after planning for long.

Causes for inefficient implementation of welfare programs and schemes are numerous ranging from corruption, resource constraints, and administrative apathy to broader cultural norms. However, these can be classified under three broad heads. They are:

- General Policy Design
- Funds
- Administrative and institutional arrangements.

General Policy Design:

The major cause for ineffective implementation of various social welfare policies is the design of the policy. In most of the cases, the policies or programs are structured and planned by the legislators placed at the Centre or the Union level who do not have the knowledge of the local conditions. They follow the 'one size fit all' approach or the 'top-down' approach and frame a policy without keeping in mind the view that there lies a huge diversity in terms of geography, socio-economic and physical structure. Therefore, a single policy design cannot produce the same effective results in all the places.

For example, Indira Awas Yojna (IAY) – which is a social welfare programme implemented by the Government of India in 1996 to provide housing facilities for people Below Poverty Line

(BPL). The main cause for its unsuccessful implementation and its failure in reaching the poorest of the poor is the design of the program. The issue of land is a major hurdle. The majority of poor people do not possess their own land and live on land that belongs to others, for example, land of landlords or Government land etc. The IAY does not have any provision for providing houses to poor people who do not possess their own land. So in the absence of land distribution measures poor people with no land are left out of the programme and thus remain deprived of the benefits offered by the IAY.

Similarly Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA), which is a flagship program of UPA government initiated in 2005 to provide guaranteed employment for 100 days to the unskilled labour in rural areas, is supposed to be implemented through Gram Panchayats. This mandatory provision creates problems in the path of its implementation in areas covered under Fifth Schedule of Indian Constitution. As in the areas under the Fifth Schedule, where as many as 63 of backward districts are located, the quality of local bodies is expected to improve only after the enactment of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996. So, the effective implementation of NREGA depends on the successful implementation of PESA (Planning Commission: 2003).

The education sector is also not left untouched from the effects of stringent policy design creating hurdles in accomplishing the targeted goals of achieving equity and growth. For example, the provisions of Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2010, makes it mandatory for all the children from the age group of 6 - 10 to produce income certificate, caste certificate, BPL card and birth certificate for availing the benefits. But this provision by default debar the Orphan children from availing the opportunity to access education. Schools are not admitting them as they want these documents which the orphaned children can never produce (Ali: 2012).

Funds:

Funds play a crucial role in the implementation of any policy, project, or program at any level. Without the monetary assistance no scheme can be carried out. The importance of concept of 'funds' can be understood from various stand points such as, allocation of fund, utilization of funds and the source of funds. The source from where the funds are generated become significant as once the funding of any project or program stops, it makes the program or the policy defunct.

For example, National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) – which is a health program initiated in 2005 by Ministry of Health – has been functioning as a project of the Government of India. Its significant contribution to improving health care infrastructure and service delivery across the country will be frittered away if it's funding ceases with the 11th Five Year Plan (FYP). Therefore, the NRHM should be included in the 12th FYP so that it does not cease to function in the paucity of funds (Jacob: 2011).

Another example which shows the importance of funds and its leakage or misutilization leading to failure of a proper implementation of policy is the Indira Awas Yojna. According to IAY provision, 'Payment should be made to the beneficiary on a staggered basis depending on the progress of the work. The entire money should not be paid to the beneficiary in lump sum. Installments of payment to be linked to the progress of work can be decided by the State Government or at the District level. Ideally, the funds should be distributed to the beneficiaries in two instalments, first instalment with the sanction order and the second instalment when the construction reaches the lintel level' (GOI: 2012).

However, the leakage of funds has made the implementation of building households a difficult task. For instance, in many cases even after starting the building of their houses, the beneficiaries could not complete the construction. Because the meagre amount they get as first instalment is not sufficient to meet the required condition, i.e., the progress work of construction should reach lintel level, for getting the second instalment. The beneficiaries did not receive further instalments and so could not complete construction of their houses.

There has also been strong criticism that on the recommendation of powerful political leaders, IAY funds are provided to people who are not supposed to be beneficiaries. Besides, funds are often not released to the States on the scheduled dates.

Administrative and Institutional Arrangements:

For the accomplishment of the goals of social welfare policies within targeted time frame the responsibility is vested on various institutions and administrative units. Therefore, when a policy fails it mean that there are loopholes in the administrative and institutional arrangements. The administrative and institutional arrangements include the resources such as staff, manpower, infrastructure, proper planning, proper demarcation of roles of administrative units such as State

Governments, Local Governing Bodies etc. It has been observed that due to following limitations the welfare policies in India are not able to produce the desired outcomes.

Lack of Technical and Professional Staff:

It is not just difficult but impossible for a single man to carry out all the administrative responsibility single handedly. Any leader requires a body of people whom he/ she can direct and lead to achieve the desired goals of the organization. Therefore, it is important to have adequate staff for the successful implementation of any policy or program. Lack of technical and professional staff have negative impact on the proper functioning of policies.

For example: Every State Government is required to appoint in each block, a full time Program Officer, exclusively responsible for the implementation of the NREGA. The State Government, however, directed Block Development Officers to take 'additional charge' to implement NREGA. The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) reports find out that 19 states had not appointed these officers in 70 per cent of the blocks surveyed. Besides, one Employment Guarantee Assistant is to be appointed in each Gram Panchayat. According to the CAG Report, 52 per cent of 513 gram panchayats surveyed had not appointed these assistants.

In addition, the State Governments were to create panels of accredited engineers at the district and block levels. They were expected to carry out costing of works to be undertaken, to make measurements of the works done to release payments to labour as stipulated in the NREGA. The CAG found that the panels were missing in 20 states it surveyed(Datt: 2008; Siddhartha and Vanaik: 2008).

In short, CAG has singled out lack of administrative and technical staff for NREGA as the key constraint responsible for procedural lapses.

Lack of Infrastructure:

Infrastructure is the basic physical and organizational structure needed for the operation of society or the enterprise. The basic physical structure for the community or country includes

roads, drinking water facility, sewage, schools, hospitals, etc. These basic structures are considered essential for enabling productivity in the economy. Shortage of these basic infrastructures leads to unsuccessful performance of many policies.

For example: The Common School System Commission, Bihar, in its report estimated that in order to universalize free and compulsory education for children in the age group of 6-14 in five years, universalize education for children from classes IX –X in eight years and to facilitate transit to classes XI-XII of 70 per cent of those who will pass class X in nine years, 5, 900 additional primary schools, 15, 500 middle schools and 19, 100 secondary schools will have to be built. The number of additional teachers to be recruited for achieving the above goals would be 2.55 lakhs at primary level, 3.24 lakhs at middle level and 4.29 lakhs at secondary level. It stands to reason that the very first and most essential requirement to be fulfilled for universalizing quality education, is to build these additional schools, recruit these additional teachers and provide training for them but the Right To Education Act 2010 does not make any attempt even to quantify these requirement (Dubey: 2009)

Lack of Proper Project Planning:

Planning is the most important part for any program or policy to be successful. Planning refers to the process of setting goals, developing strategies and outlining tasks and schedules to accomplish the goals and also help in deciding objectives both in quantitative and qualitative terms. But in case of policies initiated by Indian government, we find that most of the policies lack proper planning due to which they are unable to produce desired outcomes.

For example, the NREGA specifically mentions the creation of durable productive assets, in the form of roads, improving rural infrastructure, drought proofing, watershed development, water conservation etc. The survey by CAG found that though it promises for various assets but its main focus is on rural connectivity and wells. Other meaningful projects for rural transformation were conspicuous by their absence (Datt: 2008). Similar is in the case of IAY where community facilities such as internal roads, drainage, drinking water supply etc, and other common facilities were not provided to IAY dwellings (Lalvani: 2010).

In short, to achieve the specified objectives and goals of the programs and policies it is important to plan those programs properly by keeping in mind even the minute technicalities.

Lack of Accountability:

Accountability is considered as an important aspect of democracy. It is defined as an ability of citizens to put effective pressure on officials who deviate from the expressed wishes of a majority among them (Mookherjee: 2010). However, in most of the cases, we find that though there are provisions for promoting accountability and transparency in every policy but they are not followed because of loopholes.

For example, under NREGA, the maintenance and computerization of records is an important means of promoting accountability and transparency in the generation of guaranteed employment. Accountability and transparency are promoted through computerization because records help to (1) authenticate the number of households that demanded and received employment, (2) substantiate the caste and gender distribution of NREGA employment, (3) identify the number of days of employment provided, and (4) locate any discrepancies between the number of work days demanded and provided (Raabe, Birner et.al: 2010).

For instance, the Employment Register in many gram panchayats were not maintained or missed details on the type and duration of employment demanded, the employment allotted, and the employment that was actually taken up. Muster Rolls and Muster Roll Issue and Receipt Registers did not carry the required unique identification numbers and did not furnish information on (1) the name of the person working, (2) the respective job card number, (3) the work order number, (4) the number of days worked, and (5) the wages paid. Due to these deficiencies, wages had been paid to unregistered and fictitious workers and to workers whose names had been recorded two or three times for the same time period, resulting in overpayment. In addition, the gram panchayats did not keep photocopies of the Muster Rolls for public inspection and the block program officer typically did not digitize the Muster Rolls (CAG 2008, 51 and Section 8.8.1).

In reality, the CAG audit report identifies pronounced deficiencies in the preparation and/or maintenance of all types of records at all levels of local government. Major deficiencies concern the improper and untimely maintenance of the Employment Register, the Application Registration Register, the Job Card Register, the Asset Register, the Muster Rolls, the Muster Roll Issue and Receipt Register, and the Complaint Register.

Lack of Transparency and Absence of Social Audit:

In public administration transparency refers to unfettered access by the public to timely and reliable information on decisions and performances in the public sector. However, in many cases, it is found that in the absence of Social Audits transparency has not been maintained.

For instance, although the NREGA has provisions for transparency in the process of implementation, in actual practice, data on the work done and payments made for various kinds of jobs is kept as a closely guarded secret. As a consequence, there is a mockery of social audit. Even some of the fake NGOs are prepared to verify social audit by charging a ridiculously low fee per panchayat. As a result most radical provisions of the NREGA are violated with impunity (Datt: 2008).

Corruption:

Corruption has also taken a toll on the proper implementation of the programme. Corruption is a complex social, political and economic phenomenon that affects all countries. Corruption undermines democratic institutions, slows economic development and contributes to governmental instability.

It has been found that huge corruption is taking place in the selection procedure of the beneficiaries to avail the benefits of social welfare programs. For instance: the beneficiaries of the IAY are supposed to be selected by the Gram Panchayats but it has been found that a majority of the beneficiaries have not been selected by them. This has resulted in many amongst the poor being left out from the programme whereas people who are not in the BPL section are

availing the benefits of the IAY. Moreover, allegations have been made that out of the total amount allocated to the IAY, officers and others in various offices have appropriated funds from the programme on an individual basis.

Conclusion:

In short, it can be said that expansion of social opportunities has been the central theme and a primary objective in the country's development plans. Planners have been working since independence towards the creation of basic infrastructure and assets for the economic development. The intensities of many basic deprivations have been considerably reduced but, there is nevertheless a long way to go in ensuring anything like acceptable living conditions for all citizens.

