Topic: Planning and Coordination

[Assignment on Competency Based Training]

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Introduction:

One important premise for policy design is that the success of any one program will depend at least in part on other programs. For example, education programs will not work effectively if the students sitting the classes are hungry, or if the students are scared of walking to school because of gang violence. Therefore, we need to consider how to coordinate policies and to get them to work together (Peters 2015). In the best of all worlds, programs would be planned and designed in a way that would produce policy integration (Candel and Biesbroek 2016). All policies that influence one another would be designed in ways that produce synergy.

II. Conceptual Framework:

The quality of public policy depends on a large extent on the activities of consultation and coordination, developed on one hand inside the public institutions belonging to the executive power, and on the other hand between public institutions and representatives bodies, group of interest, and the strategic planning. Effective coordination and coherence of policies are critical for promoting good governance and ensuring successful implementation of development projects and programmes.

Policy coherence requires "the systematic promotion of mutually reinforcing policies across government departments and agencies creating synergies towards achieving the defined objective" (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2001, box 13). Coherent policies require increased coordination

between different policy making communities so that various policies are aligned to strengthen each other, or at least do not counteract each other.

Whereas, policy coordination generally means getting the various institutional and managerial systems, which formulate policy, to work together to realizing a common goal (ibid.). That is, policy coherence can only be achieved through good policy coordination.

Marume and Jaricha (2016) present coordination as the synchronization of efforts, but conceptualize it from both positive and negative perspectives. On a positive note, it means bringing about cooperation and teamwork among the persons and units of an organization. But in negative terms, it means removing conflicts, values, inconsistencies, overlapping, and working at cross-purposes among persons or units of an organization. Hence, the above conceptualization with respect to coordination makes it clear that coordination is much more than cooperation of one person with another or others toward a common goal (Marume and Jaricha 2016).

Typologies of Coordination:

Coordination in organization is classified as "internal and external." Internal coordination deals with coordinating the individual activities of persons and units of an organization which is called as functional coordination. External coordination deals with coordinating the activities of various organizational units, which is called as structural coordination (Marume and Jaricha 2016).

Horizontal and Vertical:

Horizontal coordination deals with the coordination between one unit and another, one branch and another, one division and another, or one department and another. On the other hand, vertical coordination deals with the coordination

between an executive and his supporting staff, a branch and a division, and a division and department (Marume and Jaricha 2016).

Procedural and Substantive:

Procedural coordination is operationalized as the structure of the organization itself that shows the nature of formal relationships among its members. The substantive coordination, on the other hand, is concerned with the content of the activities of the organization (Marume and Jaricha 2016).

Planning:

In everyday life, all of us make and execute certain plans to achieve our goals. For example, before going on a trip, we make a plan i.e. where and when to go, how to reach the destination, the duration of the trip, where to stay and luggage to carry, etc. All these tasks require creating an effective plan which consists of certain activities for the successful execution of a trip. Process of making such plans to achieve some goal or objective is called "Planning." In other terms, in order to execute activities in future, prior forethought is necessary and this forethought comes under the concept of "planning."

From an organizational point of view, planning is defined as "process by which an organization identifies its short-term and long-term goals, design, and implements strategies to achieve them." More precisely, **Planning** is focused on defining organizational goals or objectives, identifying different action plans, deciding and implementing the best action plan to achieve goals. Thus, planning may be considered as a rational, dynamic and integrative process.

Planning ensures effective coordination at different levels, between various departments or functions. Plans are formulated at each level i.e. top, middle, and bottom as well as in different departments. Effective execution of these plans

requires proper coordination which is possible through effective planning. Similarly, different plans like short-, mid-, and long-term plans require coordination to achieve organizational goals where planning plays an important role.

Coherence of policies, effective coordination, and planning are interdependent. Policy coherence can only be achieved through good policy coordination whereas good policy coordination can only be possible through effective planning and vice-versa.

III. Discussions:

For promoting good governance and ensuring successful implementation of development projects and programmes, we need coherence of policies, effective coordination and planning. Further, coherence of policies, effective coordination, and planning are interdependent. Policy coherence can only be achieved through good policy coordination whereas good policy coordination can only be possible through effective planning.

The effective planning depends on how effectively the goal is defined, information are collected and analysed, and plans are made, implemented and monitored:

Defining goal or objective

Goal setting is the first and important step in the planning process. A goal can be short-term, mid-term or long-term. Goals specify what to achieve by defined rules, policies, process, resources, strategies, etc.

Collecting information

Gathering information like facts and figures required to achieve goals is a necessary part of planning.

Analyzing information

The next step in the planning process is interpreting information as per goals. Analyzing information includes organizing collected information as per importance, identifying accuracy and relevancy of information from different sources, its unique features, sources and reliability for the organization.

Making a plan

Once relevant information is collected and analyzed, the next step is to formulate a plan to achieve defined goals; the plan includes identifying different activities, required resources, timelines, etc. to implement a plan.

Implement the plan

Implementing a plan refers to allocate defined activities, resources, time guidelines to individuals. In this step, strategies and plans are converted into actions to achieve goals. Implementation of plans also requires allocation of responsibility in the team which is responsible for accomplishing the plan.

Monitor the plan

Once a plan is implemented, it's necessary to evaluate and monitor its effectiveness and impact according to desired goals.

Challenges of effective Planning and Coordination:

Successful policy implementation for countries' progress towards achieving the development goals begins with leadership that possesses a clear vision of the desired outcomes and the potential policy pathways for achievement. However, sometimes it is felt that the leadership of the organization is failed to plan effectively may be due to the following reasons:

- They underestimate the importance of planning.
- They lack time for planning.
- They don't have the necessary knowledge for planning.
- They have too much reliance on their experience

- They lack meaningful objectives and goals.

Therefore, for effective planning and coordination, the officers at the top level of the organization should think and act strategically and have a clear objective and goal with high commitment, credibility and effective communication.

(ii)   There is a lack of engagement of employees of the organization in the process of planning. Therefore, it is the task of the leader to make planning a collaborative and inclusive process. It is necessary to make the employees feel engaged in the process of planning so that they will be eager to commit to the plan and take on shared responsibility for its realisation. This would enhance the vertical coordination in the organizations.

(iii)   There is a lack of effective communication between the leaders and the employees in the organization. Therefore, it is important to clearly communicate the desired results and the strategic plan to the employees. There is a need to nurture open communication encouraging everyone to give feedback and suggest improvements to the plan. It is necessary to understand that some benefits of planning, such as innovation in particular, depend on how eager employees are to voice their ideas and whether they feel heard and appreciated for giving them.

(iv)   Ineffective planning results from lack of effective co-ordination and consultation between all level of governments, departments and other stakeholders. The lack of necessary inputs and feedback of all the stakeholders on the planning formulation creates duplications, contradictions and displacements in planning efforts and therefore defeats the objectives of the development goals. In the lack of effective planning and coordination, for example, different organizations, often for good political reasons, will implement programs that are directly contradictory to

each other. Environmental agencies may want to reduce intensive agriculture while agriculture ministry will want to increase production. Similarly, one organization will make decisions that create problems for other organizations, without consultation. Therefore, coordination and coherence of policies are necessary to avoid duplications, contradictions and displacements in the planning efforts through effective horizontal coordination between all stakeholders.

(v)   A lack of coordination in an organization can decrease productivity, complicate processes and delay the completion of tasks. Delays create unreliability and will alienate citizens from the organization. In order to coordinate the efforts of an entire organization, the organization requires a systematic integration of a process that creates accountability within the organization. Implementing this type of process allows interdepartmental coordination throughout the organization between employees.

(vi)   A true focus on improving efficiency and growth can be maintained only in a culture that values efficiency and growth. It is necessary to work to create such a culture in the organisation. If efforts will be taken to help employees to learn and develop their skills, appreciate and reward personal achievements, employees will be more willing to commit to ambitious goals and demanding plans.

(vii)   Effective planning requires letting go of outdated processes, strategic thinking, revision of strategies, innovation. Therefore, there is a need to go beyond the cosmetic changes which require much courage and commitment at the top level of an organisation. There is a need that the leadership at the top level of the organization should develop in them the attitude of "commitment to change" and flexibility. That could unfreeze many protocols that could be potentially become productive.

(viii) Decision-making is an integral part of planning. It results in selecting the right action among different available options. It is also a time-bound process and eliminates confusions to reach a conclusion. Planning requires a series of decisions to be incorporated in advance. Any delay in taking correct and fast decision may affect the planning in an adverse way.

(ix)   Duplication and Unclear Departmental Priorities: Another sign of a lack of proper planning and coordination within an organization is redundancy. With redundancy, an organization will spend double the effort, material and time to produce the same item, or perform the same task, twice. Redundancy typically results from a lack of coordination between various departments within the organization, and a lack of clear responsibilities and functions. By implementing control measures to reduce redundancies, an organization can work toward improving overall coordination within the organization.

(ix)   Lost Data: Lack of coordination, meaning the failure to operate like a well-oiled machine, is often caused by inadequate data sharing and ineffective communication. Organizations must effectively utilize information to function at an optimal level. When this information is not readily available as needed within the organization, the lack of information can create a cascading effect that will damage the organization. Lack of coordination creates gaps in the acquisition and distribution of information. This in turn makes the organization's available resources ineffective and causes it to miss opportunities. By implementing an accountability system for the information, the organization can improve coordination and minimize lost information.

(x)   Regular monitoring and evaluation of the plan and programme is a major challenge in realizing the objectives of the plan. However, the successful monitoring and evaluation could be possible only if the orgnisation system has

adequate capacity and necessary knowledge to monitor the programme. Many programmes and plans are initially implemented nicely but are failed latter due to lack of its proper monitoring and evaluation.

IV. Take Away Points:

(i)   Programs would be planned and designed in a way that would produce policy integration (Candel and Biesbroek 2016). All policies that influence one another would be designed in ways that produce synergy.

(ii)   Effective coordination, coherence of policies and planning are interdependent and critical for promoting good governance and ensuring successful implementation of development projects and programmes.

(iii)   Policy coherence can only be achieved through good policy coordination whereas good policy coordination can only be achieved through effective planning and vice-versa.

(iv)   Successful policy implementation for countries' progress towards achieving the development goals begins with leadership that possesses a clear vision of the desired outcomes and the potential policy pathways for achievement. Therefore, for effective planning and coordination, the leadership / officers at the top level of the organization should think and act strategically and have clear objectives and goals with high commitment, credibility and effective communications.

(v)   Planning should be collaborative and inclusive for engaging employees of the organization in the process of planning. Further, increased co-ordination and consultation between all level of governments, departments and other stakeholders are necessary to reduce duplications, contradictions and displacements in planning efforts. This would enhance both vertical and horizontal policy co-ordination for effective planning and implementation.

(vi)   The attitudes of the leadership / officer (at top level of an organization) towards "commitment to change" and flexibility are necessary for effective planning, co-ordinations and decision makings.

(vii)   An accountability system for adequate data sharing and effective communication should be encouraged for effective planning and coordination.

(viii)   Adequate capacity, necessary knowledge and coordination should be created for effective monitoring and evaluation of the plan and programmes.

V. Conclusion:

In order to ensure successful implementation of development projects and programmes, all policies that influence one another should be designed in ways that produce synergy. For this, there is a need of holistic planning and seamless coordination of various infrastructural entities within the government. Collaborative and inclusive planning strategy along with the changing attitude of the top leadership towards thinking and acting strategically with clear

objectives and goals are necessary for successful implementations of planning and policies. Further, an accountability system for adequate data sharing and effective communication between all stakeholders along with adequate capacity and necessary knowledge should be created for effective co-ordination, monitoring and evaluation of the plan and programmes.

References:

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