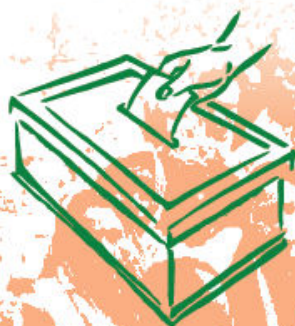




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CENTRAL E-GOVERNANCE PROJECTS IN INDIA: INITIATIVES, OUTCOMES AND CHALLENGES

Kawaljeet Kaur* and Jaswinder Singh**

Governments and public sector organizations around the world are striving to reform their public administration organizations and deliver more efficient and cost effective services, as well as better information and knowledge to their stakeholders. E-governance is the effective use of Information & Communication Technology (ICT) to improve the system of governance that is in place, and thus provide better services to the Citizens. The focus of this paper is to analyze the current status of e-governance projects which comes under the preview of central government in India. The paper also covers outcome and prospects of the projects and key challenges with possible remedial solutions for successful implementation of e-governance.

Keywords

Projects, E-Governance, Outcomes

Introduction

The development of ICTs in the recent years has brought significant improvements in human development through diffusion of information. The increasing usage of ICTs has brought dramatic transformations in the society by empowering the masses and widening the reach of civil society all over the world. The advanced technologies like internet and other web facilities have improved the interaction of citizens with the government. "E-government involves the use of the ICT to facilitate an efficient, speedy and transparent process of providing information to the public and to carry out administration activities". The Information Technology has been widely used by the government in order to implement e-government projects (Alhomod and Shafi: 2012). E-Governance is broadly defined as an "application of Information Technology to the functioning of the Government. E-government not only fosters the transparency in the government processes but also empower the citizens to participate in the political processes (Hashmi and Darem: 2008).

The fundamental motivation for the implementation of e-Governance in India was to provide SMART Government. For the first time on 16th May 2006, e-governance was introduced at large scale in India by approving National e-Governance Plan. In the year 2011, 4 more projects - Health, Education, Public Distribution System and Posts had been introduced and now the number has increased to 31 (Bhanti and Kumar: 2012).

The objective of the paper is to evaluate the current status of various e-governance initiatives taken up by the central government at the National, State, District and even Block level in the country. Apart from that it also covers various constraints in achieving progress in the implementation of the projects.

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Current State of Environmental Management of Bangladesh: A Review

Farjana Nasrin*

In the recent years, the environmental management has become a priority issue and domain in Bangladesh. The environment has been deteriorating rapidly during the last couple of years. Since, environment is a multi-dimensional phenomenon; it is not an easy task to maintain environmental management. It is also concerned with the role of government in environmental decision making and implementation process. The aim of environmental management is to establish sustainable development, ensure planned and ecologically sound public policies, integrate environment in all development activities and ensure environmentally sound development in all sectors. The present situation of management of the country is that it has commitment but does not have the capability to manage the growing and complicated problems related to environment. The study attempts to explore the existing scenario of environmental management from earlier period to present status of Bangladesh. This paper also attempts to evaluate environmental function and identify their present problems as well as future guidelines for sound environmental management. The study primarily draws on established secondary sources of information.

Keywords

Administration, Management, Performance, Coordination, Policy, Law

Introduction

Good management is the prerequisite for better environment and natural resources management. Unfortunately, Bangladesh faces serious problems with stress on the carrying capacities of its natural ecosystems and its human service systems. Good and effective environmental management can solve the problems with a commitment. The environmental Management is not "management of the environment", it is the management of activities within tolerable constraints imposed by the government with full consideration of ecological factors (Krishnamoorthy, 2005). It covers the conscious and planned efforts and activities undertaken by the government to minimize damages to the environment and measures undertaken to regulate the ongoing activities in different areas. It also focuses on creating public awareness on environment protection, ensuring active participations of public in environmental protection activities, preserving, protecting and developing the natural resource base, promoting the effectiveness, accountability, coordination, and efficiency of the administration, emphasizing on information technology, working partnership with civil society and private sector and establishing rule of law in environmental sector.

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Globalization to Higher Education: Quality and Quantity Assurance

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Contemporary globalization has rapidly developed into a complex system of circuits of exchange, interactive dynamics, and structures that collectively interact at high levels to produce rapid change affecting most aspects of human life. Like most complex systems contemporary globalization acts to produce outcomes that are difficult to foresee, but which operate to influence most aspects of the system. Higher education as an intrinsic element of contemporary globalization is implicated throughout these interactive dynamics and effects. This paper examines ten aspects of globalization which can usefully be viewed as challenges to higher education especially in its efforts to develop varied ideas and demonstrations of quality and systems of quality assurance that will be useful and sustainable in this environment.

Keywords

Contemporary Globalization, Circuits of Exchange, Simultaneity of Effect, Knowledge Society, Alignment, Demographic Shifts, Inequality, Triple Linkage, Rankings, Reductionism

Introduction

It has become a commonplace – albeit not necessarily one of obvious implications – that much of what higher education is, and is becoming, is directly affected by what contemporary globalization is and is becoming. The two are connected in a wide variety of ways.

The more we study contemporary globalization¹ the more researchers and observers are prone to see it as approximating a complex system, a usage which implies a large number of inter-related and interactive components, operating within a structure which may itself be changing through feed-back and feed-forward loops, which is characterized by constant change (and in many instances accelerating change), and *qua system* is likely to produce both unexpected and unpredictable consequences (Harvey, 1990.) The simple, but problematic assertion here is that as higher education increasingly participates within this system of complexity, its dynamics, behaviors, structures and effects, come to be ineluctably linked to (and indeed inseparable from) those of the larger system of globalization itself.

Again, much of this assertion is no doubt commonplace, and I dare say that we all give some kind of daily recognition to the truth of the proposition, whether it be to recognize the extent to which our students and faculty are linked to “international” activities, the degree to which our budgeting and search for external funds is linked to notions of global rankings, the recognition we give to the commonality

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1 I intend this usage to differentiate the study of global dynamics and effects during the period encompassed roughly from 1960 to the present and to differentiate it from what has become the well-marked study of “historical globalization,” an effort to trace the origins of contemporary globalization phenomena through their historical antecedents. For a good review of this, see Steger 2009.

SEBI LODR Business Responsibility Report – An Effective Governance Tool to Manage Stakeholders Relationship

Alok Kumar*

Greater transparency and better disclosure through responsible reporting keep stakeholders better informed about the way a company is being managed. Good corporate governance includes a vigilant board of directors, sensible disclosure and adequate reports of meaningful information about the board and management process, and a transparent ownership structure. As per clause (f) of sub regulation (2) of the SEBI LODR Regulation 34, the Annual Report should contain a Business Responsibility Report describing the initiatives taken by the listed entity from an environmental, social and governance perspective, in the format as specified by SEBI. Traditionally, the reporting practices of Indian companies have been poor as compared to their western counterparts. One reason for slow pace of adoption of responsibility reporting has also been the lack of demand from Indian investors & stakeholders. The objective of this paper is to discuss how SEBI's LODR - Business Responsibility Report could strengthen the stakeholder's relationship with the corporates. Such reporting were voluntary for listed companies by the financial year 2011-12 under NVG SEE Guidelines but from the financial year 2012-13 reporting under SEBI's listing agreement Clause 55 became mandatory for top 100 companies by market capitalization and further it has been now extended upto top 500 listed companies.

Keywords

Business Responsibility Report, Governance, Disclosure, Clause 55, SEBI, NVG SEE

Introduction

Now a days, business enterprises are increasingly seen as decisive components of social system and they are considered accountable not merely to their shareholders from a revenue and profitability perspective but also to the larger society which is also its stakeholder. Hence, adoption of responsible business practices in the interest of the social set-up and the environment are as vital as their financial and operational performance. This is all the more relevant for listed entities which, considering the fact that they have accessed funds from the public, have an element of public interest involved, and are obligated to make exhaustive continuous disclosures on a regular basis. One of the critical aspects of responsible business practices is that businesses should not only be responsible but they should also be seen as socially, economically and environmentally responsible by ensuring better compliance with corporate governance norms, with this view SEBI has notified new rules making it mandatory for top 500 listed companies, at the end of every year, to submit business responsibility reports, covering their

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Theory and Practice of Contracting Out Local Public Services in India

Anil Monga* and Deepak Sharma**

Contracting out of local public services has been increasingly adopted as a mechanism for provision of local services all around the world due to mounting pressure on the urban local governments. The evidence from various studies conducted across globe reveals that contracting out has resulted in better quality of services in cost effective manner. The present study aims to examine the process and performance of contracting out in India with special reference to Municipal Corporation (Urban Local Government) Chandigarh. On the basis of primary and secondary data it has been found that though the services are economical through contracting out but the process is suffering from many shortcomings beginning right from the contract-design to monitoring stage. Further the study establishes that although the process results in cost savings but is generated at the cost of exploitation of the contracted out workers. On the basis of responses of 600 citizens, it has also been found that the level of satisfaction of citizens towards the quality of contracted out services is low. Lastly the study suggests the policy prescriptions for plugging the gaps for yielding desired results.

Keywords

Smart City, Urban Governance

Introduction

Local government is of utmost importance for a democratic country as it signifies right to participate by the people in local affairs. Due to the adoption of the concept of welfare state the functions of state has expanded enormously. This has put great pressure on the meagre resources of urban local bodies. In order to cope up with ever increasing demands and rising expectations of the people the state has changed its role from producer to facilitator. State agencies particularly at the local level are adopting various forms and approaches to allow private parties to play a part in providing various goods and services which broadly includes service contract, management contract, lease, concession, Greenfield projects, divesture etc.¹

Out of these approaches contracting out is most prevalent across the globe. Contracting out can be defined as hiring of private sector firms or non-profit organization to provide goods or services for government. The government remains the financier and has management and keeps policy control over the type and the quality of service to be provided.

The practice of contracting out is being increasingly adopted by urban local bodies all around the world including India. The present study has been initiated to examine the contracting out in local governance

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1 Nand Dhmeja and Rakesh Gupta (2008), "Infrastructure Financing" *Nagarloak*, Vol.XXXIX, No.2, April-June, pp. 1-11.

Understanding India's Economic Diplomacy

Simi Mehta*

Economic diplomacy of a country is aimed at furthering its economic interests when negotiating with other countries, by anticipating and influencing the outcomes of their future economic policy regimes. With the unfurling of the era of liberalisation and globalization, India brought significant alterations in its economic policies, particularly those pertaining to foreign trade. This was the beginning of the saga of Indian business enterprises playing crucial role in advancing India's economic interests abroad. This paper seeks to provide an understanding of the tenets of economic diplomacy and the extent to which India, (by virtue of being the world's third largest economy, based on Gross Domestic Product (Purchasing Power Parity)) is cementing economic relationships around the world, with a special focus on the current Narendra Modi government. Given India's dynamism in conducting its Track Two Diplomacy in economics and attaining the objectives of consistent growth, this paper vindicates, what former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger had prophesied in 1994, that India would be one of the six most powerful states in the new international system of the twenty first century.

Keywords

Economic Diplomacy, India, Foreign Policy

Introduction

Economics and diplomacy have always gone hand in hand; and the result is a fresh bond making for peace and for national security (Dennis: 1925). Diplomacy is even more directly related to economic performance because international relations have increasingly come to be shaped by economic relations (Baru: 2002). While economic diplomacy as such is ages old, its academic study is quite recent. The subject matter of economic diplomacy arises at the crossroads between international political economy and International Relations (IR) theory, on the one hand, and organization theory and theories of negotiation, on the other (Bayne and Woolcock: 2003).

Economic diplomacy is concerned with anticipating and influencing the outcomes of future economic policy regimes of other countries. This requires a need for better understanding of the working of market forces in different countries in the given dynamic global economic environment. The process of continuous engagement through economic diplomacy helps a country in advancing its economic interests and, equally importantly, those of its partners.

According to a narrow perspective, economic diplomacy relates to the conduct of government officials and/or diplomats in managing the negotiations with other nations, so as to end on a positive note. However, the broader perspective of economic diplomacy covers the ambit of the application of skills and tact in the conduct of official relations, particularly trade and investment, and in engaging the private sector and civil society constructively by governments of sovereign states (Mehta: 2011). In

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The Political Economy of State-Owned Enterprises Restructuring in South Africa

William Gumede*

When the African National Congress (ANC) and its tripartite alliance of the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) came to power in South Africa in 1994, they were overwhelming in favour of the nationalization of strategic industries, and using the state, particularly SOEs to achieve economic growth, development, employment-creation and redistribution goals. The privatization of SOEs as a policy was strongly opposed by the ANC and its alliance partners. However, in power, the ANC government changed tack, and embarked on a reform program of SOEs, which included full and partial privatization of key SOEs, and the corporate restructuring of others. The effectiveness of the SOEs reform was undermined by ideological conflicts within and established local business interests and civil society groups outside the governing ANC tripartite alliance, over the merits, content and beneficiaries of the restructuring.

Keywords

Restructuring, Privatization, Nationalization, State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs), South Africa

Introduction

State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) formed a significant part of South Africa's economy during apartheid, with the government owning a large asset base of SOEs in sectors such as energy, transport, minerals, defence, industries, post, telecommunications, forests, and holiday resorts. These were used to expand the white Afrikaner middle class through affirmative action, build businesses through favourable procurement, provide jobs for the unemployed and rollout infrastructure in white areas (O'Meara 1983, 1996; Terreblanche 2002; Van der Westhuizen 2007)

South Africa's so-called Bantustans, homelands and 'independent' states, such as Transkei, Ciskei, Bophuthatswana, Garankuwa, KwaZulu and Venda, to which millions of black South Africans were relegated to by the apartheid government as part of its policy to segregate blacks and white, along racial lines, also created their own SOEs, which "ranged from entertainment casinos, to mines, farms, pharmacies, petrol stations and a whole range of odds and ends" (Radebe 1999).

When the 1994 democratic government took power, the SOEs were assigned to different national departments. It was estimated there more than 700 SOEs in 1994 (Presidency 2012). Furthermore, in the transition from the apartheid government to the ANC the ownership of some SOEs were quickly transferred into white private hands, others stripped and others just not accounted for (Gumede 2012; DBSA 2011).

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EMPOWERING WOMEN – ACCESS TO PUBLIC SPACES

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This paper addresses the growing concern of hampered access to public space by women in cities and why it is important for the development and empowerment of women. Safe cities are the foundation of gender equality. This paper reviews literature for concepts of public space and gender in public space. These constructs are relatively unexplored. Furthermore, two of the targets of Goal 11 of the 17 sustainable development goals (SDG) of the UN specifically address women. Therefore, policy making pertaining to women's universal access to safe public spaces gains immediacy. These constructs would be a good start for such policies.

Keywords

Women, Access to Public Space, Empowerment, Sustainable Development Goals, Public Policy

Urbanisation, Globalisation and Women's Access to Public Spaces

Cities are the nerve centres for the growth of ideas and innovation, trade and commerce, science, culture and social development, political debate and much more and have facilitated the social, economic and political advancement of people. Rapid urbanisation, both by way of growth in area and in population, the growth of city regions, and interconnectivity with rural areas, has led to challenges. Common urban challenges include congestion and lack of open spaces, lack of funds for basic services, demand for housing and declining infrastructure. Policymakers are confronted with the dilemma of striking a balance between creation of jobs and prosperity and not straining land and resources. Gender equality is however ignored entirely in urban planning.

- Safe cities with unhindered access to public space are the backbone of gender equality. The lack of safety excludes women from the social, economic and political sphere. I propose to argue that women's access to public and private space, both in terms of physical and psychological space is vital for their empowerment and consequently to society as a whole.
- The structure of this paper is as follows: first, an introduction as to why the issue of access to public space; second, a conceptualization of public space and gender in public space; third, the data that points to gender equality and further data that requires collection and analysis; fourth, a presentation of different possibilities to improve the safety of cities and thereby the access of women to public spaces. In this paper, I attempt to address the problem of the lack of freedom for women in public spaces.

The 2014 World Urbanization Prospects report by UN DESA states that the largest urban growth is expected to take place in India, China and Nigeria. Plan International has carried out as part of their 'Because I am a Girl' campaign, an urban program study in Cairo, Delhi, Hanoi, Kampala and Lima, comprising over 1,000 adolescent girls.¹ The research reveals that there are some benefits to girls living in urban areas. Girls in cities are usually more educated and marry later compared to their rural

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1 <https://girlsglobe.org/2015/10/27/sdg-11-building-cities-for-women-and-girls/>

Sustainable Urban Water Supply in India: Some Issues of Governance

Samanta Sahu*

Water needs in urban India have increased on an unmatched scale over the years. Consequently the demand for water has outpaced its supply. A consensus has evolved that the current water development and management practices are highly unsustainable. Several research studies point out that the problem of scarcity of drinking water in urban areas is not due to its shortage, but due to the absence of principles of water governance, proper mechanism for conservation, efficient distribution and effective use and management of the vital resource. Unless significant changes are made in the governance approach of this sector, there will be major crisis which affects development in general. Over a period of time it is seen that planning for water resource and its development in India is increasingly viewed as a techno-managerial and bureaucratic exercise. Water governing institutions are often headed by generalist bureaucrats or engineers. In such an arrangement, what follows is planning without social concern and mostly based on demand management such as fixing tariffs, full cost-recovery and so on. Moreover, this approach of water resource management is non-participatory and the role of stake holders and community members are overlooked both in the implementation and decision-making process. Consequently the crisis of access to safe drinking water in India has deepened. Therefore significant changes in the focus and approach to governance are required to make water supply in urban areas sustainable.

Keywords

Drinking Water, Water Governance, Urban Areas

Introduction

In the last few years there has been a global shift towards cities, where an increasing number of people stated living in urban areas. Those in the rural areas increasingly are dependent on the urban for their living. This is one of the clearest of indication where the world is heading towards in the years to come. As one of the newly industrializing economy and rapidly urbanizing country, in the next couple of decades the urban population in India will surpass its rural. India has been known largely for its rural population and agrarian economy of about 70%. But the scenario is rapidly changing giving way to an urbanizing India. In this context it becomes imperative to look into the capacity of cities and towns to meet the future challenges. One of the most challenging areas, this paper discusses is the access to water and the water security of the people in cities for a sustainable urban future.

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