Chapter 13: Governance and Public Policy

Questions — Let's Explore

Q1 "Good governance is the responsibility of the government alone." Do you agree with this statement? Give reasons to support your answer.

No, good governance is not the sole responsibility of the government. The chapter clearly states that while governance is the government's responsibility, good governance depends on how different sections of society and government perform their duties and work together. Citizens elect representatives, follow laws, and participate in public life. The media brings important issues to public attention. Civil society organisations raise awareness about social concerns. The private sector contributes through economic activity and innovation. Good governance, therefore, requires the combined efforts of all these stakeholders, not just the government alone.

Q2 Do you think students can contribute to good governance? Write a short note describing any five ways in which students can become more responsible and active citizens.

Yes, students can make a meaningful contribution to good governance. (1) Voting and civic awareness: understanding democratic processes and encouraging families to vote responsibly. (2) Following rules: obeying traffic rules, school regulations, and environmental guidelines, which upholds the rule of law. (3) Raising concerns: reporting civic problems such as broken street lights or unclean water sources to local authorities or representatives. (4) Participating in community initiatives: joining cleanliness drives, tree-plantation programmes, or awareness campaigns organised by the school or local bodies. (5) Providing feedback: sharing opinions on government schemes like Swachh Bharat or NEP 2020 through surveys, discussions, or social media, helping policymakers improve programmes.

Q3 Choose any one public policy [for example, Right to Education (RTE), Swachh Bharat Mission, PM POSHAN, Ayushman Bharat, Digital India, or Jal Jeevan Mission] and prepare a chart showing: the problem it addresses; the major stakeholders involved; how different actors coordinate; the role of citizens in its success. Present your findings to the class.

Guidance answer — this is a chart-preparation and class-presentation activity. Choose one policy, for example Swachh Bharat Mission. Your chart should cover four sections: (1) The problem addressed — open defecation, poor sanitation, and urban/rural waste management. (2) Major stakeholders — Central and State governments, municipal bodies, NGOs, schools, and citizens. (3) How actors coordinate — the Central Government provides the framework and funds; states and local bodies implement construction and awareness drives; NGOs mobilise communities. (4) Role of citizens — building and using household toilets, practising waste segregation, and reporting sanitation gaps to local authorities. Use arrows or a flowchart to show how these actors connect.

Q4 Answer the following in one or two sentences. (a) What is governance? (b) How is governance different from government? (c) What is meant by public policy? (d) Name any four principles of good governance.

(a) Governance is the process by which decisions affecting public life are made, implemented, and monitored, involving governments, institutions, citizens, the media, civil society, and private organisations working together for the welfare of the people. (b) Government refers to the institutions that exercise political authority — the Legislature, Executive, and Judiciary — while governance refers to the broader process of how decisions are made and implemented; government focuses on who governs, whereas governance focuses on how governing is carried out. (c) Public policy is a course of action adopted by the government to address public problems, meet people's needs, and promote the welfare of society, covering what should be done, why, who will do it, how it will be implemented, and how its success will be measured. (d) Four principles of good governance are: transparency, accountability, participation, and the rule of law.

Q5 Compare the following and present your answer in a tabular form. (a) Government and governance. (b) Policy and public policy.

(a) Government vs Governance — Government: refers to the institutions that exercise political authority; includes the Legislature, Executive, and Judiciary; focuses on who governs. Governance: refers to the process of decision-making and implementation; includes government, citizens, media, civil society, and private organisations; focuses on how governing is carried out. (b) Policy vs Public Policy — Policy: a planned course of action adopted by any organisation (school, company, housing society) to guide its functioning; applies to a limited group. Public Policy: a course of action adopted specifically by the government to address issues affecting society as a whole; formulated for public benefit, implemented by public institutions, and financed through public funds such as taxes.

Q6 Imagine you have been appointed to advise the district administration on improving governance. You have proposed six points (given below), but the administration decides to prioritise only three areas for improvement. Which three would you recommend as priority areas, and which one out of the three do you feel is the most important? (a) Improve drinking water facilities in schools. (b) Improve sanitation and public toilets in schools and market areas. (c) Provide tricycles for orthopaedically challenged students. (d) Install open-area swings and open-air gym in public parks. (e) Ensure the vaccination of stray dogs to prevent rabies. (f) Ensure distribution of iron and folic acid tablets for female students in schools.

The three priority areas I would recommend are (a), (b), and (f). Good governance, as the chapter explains, must be inclusive and responsive to people's basic needs. Safe drinking water (a) is fundamental to health and directly affects students' attendance and learning. Improved sanitation (b) protects public health across schools and market areas, benefiting the widest population. Distribution of iron and folic acid tablets (f) addresses anaemia among adolescent girls, improving their health and educational outcomes. Among these, I consider (a) — drinking water — the most important, because access to clean water is a basic human right and the foundation for all other welfare outcomes.

Q7 Match the policy action point to its corresponding stage in the policy cycle. (1) Assessing the impact of the policy — (2) Putting the policy into action — (3) Framing the legislation — (4) Multi-dimensional consultation with stakeholders — (5) Addressing a new need of the people —

(1) Assessing the impact of the policy → Policy Evaluation. (2) Putting the policy into action → Policy Implementation. (3) Framing the legislation → Policy Adoption. (4) Multi-dimensional consultation with stakeholders → Policy Formulation. (5) Addressing a new need of the people → Policy Desirability (problem identification).

Q8 Read the following case and answer the given questions. The government launches a programme to plant one lakh trees in a city. Funds are allocated, but only a few saplings survive because they are not watered or protected. (a) Which stage of the policy cycle appears to be weak? (b) Which organisations should coordinate to improve the programme? (c) Suggest two measures that could improve the outcome.

(a) The weak stage is Policy Implementation — the policy and funding are in place but the actual execution (watering, maintenance, and protection of saplings) has not been carried out effectively, showing poor on-ground follow-through. (b) The local municipal corporation or urban local body should coordinate with the Public Works Department, forest or horticulture departments, resident welfare associations, and civil society organisations to ensure sustained care of the saplings. (c) Two measures: First, assign specific departments or NGOs the responsibility of watering and guarding each batch of saplings, with regular monitoring and accountability checks. Second, involve local residents and school students in a 'One Sapling, One Guardian' initiative so that citizens take ownership of trees planted near their homes or schools, ensuring regular care and reporting.

Q9 Read each statement carefully. Do you agree or disagree? Give reasons for your answer. (a) A good public policy can fail if it is not implemented properly. (b) Citizen participation sometimes makes decision-making slower, but it can improve governance. (c) Technology alone cannot ensure good governance.

(a) Agree. The chapter illustrates through the tree-planting case study that even well-funded policies fail when implementation is weak. The policy process requires not just formulation and adoption but also active implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Without these steps, even well-designed policies cannot deliver benefits to the people. (b) Agree. Consulting citizens, NGOs, and experts takes time — the NEP 2020 process involved 2.5 lakh Gram Panchayats and received about two lakh suggestions. However, this wide consultation incorporated diverse needs and made the policy more inclusive and effective, showing that participation improves governance even if it slows the process initially. (c) Agree. The chapter states that e-governance can make administration more transparent and accessible, but it is effective only when people have access to digital devices, reliable internet, and the skills to use them. Technology cannot replace accountability, citizen participation, or the rule of law — the human and institutional dimensions of governance remain essential.

Q10 Design a public policy. You are a member of your school's student representative body. Identify one issue, for example, plastic waste, water wastage, road safety, energy conservation, or littering in public places. Prepare a simple policy proposal that includes: the reason for selecting the issue; your proposed solution; who should implement it; how will students participate; how will you know whether the policy has succeeded. Present your proposal to the class as a chart or slideshow presentation.

Guidance answer — this is a policy-design and presentation activity. Choose one issue, for example plastic waste on the school campus. Your proposal should cover five elements: (1) Reason for selecting: single-use plastics generate large amounts of waste, degrade the environment, and clog drains. (2) Proposed solution: a 'Plastic-Free Campus Policy' banning single-use plastic bottles and bags, with reusable alternatives encouraged. (3) Implementers: the school principal approves the policy; class teachers monitor daily compliance; the canteen and tuck-shop stop selling plastic-packaged items. (4) Student participation: students form eco-squads to collect data on plastic use, run awareness drives, and report violations. (5) Success measurement: monthly audits of plastic waste collected, reduction targets (e.g., 50% within one term), and feedback from students and staff on compliance. Present using a flowchart showing the policy cycle from problem to evaluation.