

Review: Toksoz, Fikret: Good governance: improving quality of life

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Book Review

GOOD GOVERNANCE: IMPROVING QUALITY OF LIFE

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Book Reviewed: *Good Governance: Improving Quality of Life* by Fikret Toksoz. Book I, Government-Governance. Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV) Publications, ISBN 978-605-5832-00-1, 2008, 100 pages

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Good governance plays a key role in the legitimacy of the government and contributes to bringing the quality of decision making through collective action. There can be governance without government. This is because governance is the process, procedure, and mechanism, which signifies a transformation from a type of relationship where one side governs the other to a set of relationships where mutual interaction takes place in order to make desirable choices for the citizens.

The book of Toksöz, *Good Governance: Improving Quality of Life* has organized into two book parts. The first book is named as the book I which is titled as “Government – Governance” and the second book is named as book II which is titled as “Participatory Tools for Governance”. For the sake of manageability and saving time, I have obliged to review the only book I of Toksöz. This implies that book II is not part of this review. At the opening of this book, Toksöz has highlighted the contents which are comprised in both books; I and II. In this part of the book (Book foreword), the criticisms on the naming of government made by scholars were somehow explained. The book described that the term governance had given due attention due to the forces of globalization (see foreword). Moreover, good governance as a new paradigm which comprises essential principles for better consolidation of democratic management was shortly explained.

The introduction part of Toksöz’s book has investigated the basic concept of governance as the intersection of the state, civil society, NGOs and private sectors as well as the essentiality of good governance principles to improve the quality of life through wise use of public resources. Moreover, this part of the book has tried to explain the importance of effective participation of different stakeholders to assure the quality of participatory democracy and foundations for good governance.

The book I of Toksöz has organized into three parts. Part one deals with the issues and concepts of governance, principles of good governance and the role of globalization. Part two describes the transition from government to governance in Turkey; from Tanzimat [Reorganization of the

Ottoman State] to the republic and Republicanism in Turkey. In the last part of book I, problems and prospects of governance are highlighted.

In the first part of the book—Government to governance, the author shows the emergence of governance paradigm by highlighting the emergence of public administration as the main government apparatus before the concept of governance agenda got the attention of the countries worldwide. The author also explains the prime objectives of public administration which influenced the birth of governance as a development agenda and describes the socio-economic and technological impacts of globalization which led to the concept of governance and good governance concepts (see page 13 and 14). It is clear that the book has contributed much and is more adequate for describing the Turkish governance policies in the context of the Turkish people. Thus, the idea of public administration within the concept of governance has contributed much to the transformation of government to democratic governance.

In part one of this book, the author clearly defines governance as the decision-making process which is carried out in cooperation with the participation of all stakeholders and that managers can act in a conciliatory, transparent, accountable, effective and responsible manner. However, the concept of governance is narrowly defined because it is defined only in one dimension (i.e., decision-making aspect). Even the author didn't clearly show how cooperation has to be formed and how it works between and among all stakeholders. Similarly, the role of all stakeholders who are interacting together for governing is not explained in detail. It is only somehow the role of the managers is highlighted (page 17). In addition, the book gives the widest coverage for civil society organizations and gives little room for other governance actors. This would create a kind of criticism that the book has not addressed the core foundational values of governance and its importance for enhancing democratic service delivery to the citizens of the country. Thus, this book has faced some kind of imperfections and limitations in describing the conceptual inclusion of governance. Hence, the role of all stakeholders including the bureaucratic apparatus, which is the government, and other actors who can play a significant role for the transition of the government to governance apparatus has to be clearly stated in the book. And the ways and methods of making cooperation should be clearly shown and identified.

As I have described in the first page of this review, in the part two section of the book, the transition from government to governance in Turkey, the author explains the restructuring of the state administration as the most important and key governance issue in Turkey. The political scenario and legal as well as the political transition of Turkey are well articulated in the book. This insight description made by the author could contribute great importance to the governance architecture of Turkey and thereby will give a lesson to the Western Asian Countries to improve the quality of governance structure and level of participation in their respective government apparatus. In this particular section of the book, I have observed that Toksöz clearly described the transition of the government in Turkey from Ottoman Magna Carta or Charter of Alliance (page 22) to Tanzimat Edict (Reorganization of the Ottoman State) and the new Ottomanism movement. Furthermore, the author shows the Turkish's transition to democracy and close establishment of civil society organization (pages 51 and 52), the establishment of the public administration initiatives and the Turkish political atmosphere of establishing the republicanism state apparatus in the country (pages 65 and 67). Besides, the democratic governance, decentralization reforms, and new managerial tools in Turkey are relatively described in the book (pages 59-64). This is a good insight and an important contribution of the book. Hence, it is possible to say that the book has a great deal of scientific and theoretical contributions to the

development of governance and assurance of good governance in Turkey and the Western Asian states.

Even though this book has scientific and theoretical contributions in assuring the quality of governance structure in Turkey, details of analysis on the broadest implication of the governance architecture for the development of the Turkish people is not well addressed. In the same fashion, it lacks a critical and in-depth investigation of the democratic transition to governance restructuring and its implication to the countries of the world. The author has tried to describe the scenario of the political and legal transformation of the Turkish government; however, the description is not fully supported by relevant and empirical previous works. It is advisable that supporting and linking our works with important and relevant empirical studies could enhance the credibility and reliability of our studies. Thus, this book relatively lacks this even if it has many positive aspects.

The last part of book I analyzes problems and prospects of governance. Problems regarding to participation of the people and some prospects of governance in Turkey are relatively highlighted (page 93-99). In this section of the book, Toksöz highlights problems of governance related with effective participation and describes some prospects of governance. In this book, the author measures the effectiveness of governance in Turkish in terms of stakeholders' participation in a very narrow perspective. It is fact that effective participation in different aspects of the government has a significant influence to bring the quality of governance. However, addressing multiple governance indicators or dimensions plays an important role to clearly assess the challenges and prospects of country governance in Turkey. The practices of governance in Turkey can be measured in terms of participation, accountability, responsiveness, the security of the state, government legitimacy, political stability and political competition, freedom of religion, and justice in the use of state resources and policies. The Country Report (2016) on Turkish Sustainable Governance Indicators shows that continuous civil wars in Syria, political and societal problems, the monopoly of state resources and policies by Kemalist elites (the military and judiciary), continuous mass protests against the government, and problems related government structure have affected the quality of governance architecture in Turkey (Genckaya et al., 2016).

In general speaking, even though the book has some drawbacks, it is easily understandable and clear. It also brings functional and procedural contributions to the works emphasized on the governance architecture and practices of its guiding principles, the transition to democratic governance, politico-legal transformation and the challenges related to governance. The substantive and procedural contributions of this book (volume) have brought great debates and scholarly attention on the governance agenda. Moreover, the book shows fruitful and important directions for future scholarly in-depth investigations.

Reference

Genckaya, Ö., Togan, S., Schulz, L., & Karadag, R. (Coordinators) (2016). *Turkey Report: Sustainable governance indicators 2016*. Available at: https://www.sgi-network.org/docs/2016/country/SGI2016_Turkey.pdf