

Urban Governance and Development Management (UGDM)
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Lecture – 53
Problem Solving and Decision Making

Welcome to lecture 53, in this week we are discussing various competencies required for city managers, in the first lecture in this week, we have discussed that the image of the city, the concept of the image and then we discussed various competencies required for the city manager to improve the image to improve the urban governance, out of those competencies various competencies are there like decision making, negotiation skill, communication skill, using power, using finance etc.

But within the limited scope of this course, we are going to discuss some of them with little more details, so today within those competencies we are going to; the competences of a decision making, so name of this lecture is problem solving and decision making.

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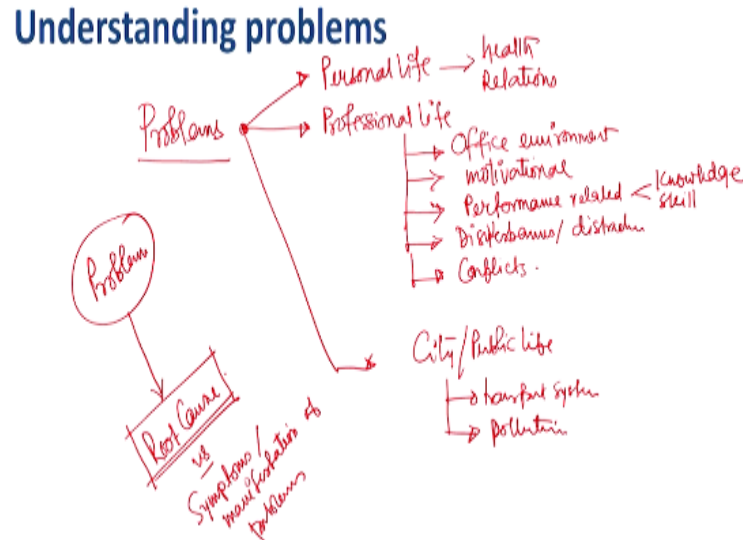
Contents

- ❖ Understanding problems ✓
- ❖ Problems as challenge ✓
- ❖ Facing challenges ✓
- ❖ Decision making process ✓
- ❖ Decision making and actions

Under this lecture, we will cover how we understand the problem, we recognise the problems of work place and otherwise then how we can see the problems as a challenge for any and as an opportunity and how we can face those challenges and take decision making to resolve the

challenges, what is the decision making process and then from decision making to actions, how we can take salient actions to resolve the problems.

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Now, I hope that the term, problem is very much acquainted with all of you, you must have faced problems in your workplace, in your personal life, in public life and you have been trying nicely to resolve those problems. Now, problems are generated from various source, it can be generated through your health conditions, it can be generated in your office conditions which can be related to your performance of work, the office; in the office conditions, it can be related to your office environment or motivational aspect.

It can be related to external influences like political influences, so many factors are there which can create seemingly understood as problems, okay, so I write the term problems and it can be generated through your personal life specifically from your health, your relations etc., it can be generated through your professional life and in the professional life, it can be like, it can be generated due to your office environment.

It can be motivational, it can be your performance related specifically saying pertaining to your knowledge and skill which you are giving towards your office, it can be related to your disturbances and distractions, it can be due to conflicts, and so many reasons can be there and

apart from that it can be in your city or public life, may be the city does not have a better transport system, may be it is due to your pollution.

Now, some of the problems are manageable or understandable at your own level and some of the problems are not understandable and controllable at your level definitely it has; it is to be done at the by some other person's group, so definitely it is very important to understand the problem whether the problems are at your level or at the others level and also to understand in a better way the problem, we have to ask the problem in various ways like what is exactly the problem.

Sometimes, whenever whatever we perceive as a problem that is sometimes the symptoms or the external manifestation of the problem and we do not go into the root cause of the problem, so therefore this 2 term is also important that when we see the problem, we should go to the root cause of the problem and we should identify, distinguish between the root cause and the symptom or manifestations of problems, okay.

So, going into main cause or main root of the problem is important to identify the problem and it is possible if we ask the root; the symptoms or the manifestation whizzing various words like what was the exact problem, when it was started and how was the; how was it perceived or assist as a problem and what are the implications of the problem, what was my role, something like that then, you will probably be able to identify the problem in a better way, so that you can resolve the problem.

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Understanding problems

- ❖ What is the reason? — *Root causes*
- ❖ Who are responsible? — *You + others*
- ❖ When it started? *How?*
- ❖ What are the possible way out? *Way out*
- ❖ Is it controllable at your end?
- ❖ Can you do anything?

So, these are the possible questions which will come to your mind, so what is the reason and the root cause, how it happened, second is who are responsible, it is you or other, sometimes to identify the problem, we usually point the fingers to the others but it is also important to identify the share of the reasons or the causes caused by myself, otherwise if you are not biased and not legitimate to identify the responsibility, you are not able to resolve the problem.

And then when it was started, is it started just now, is it a long term problem which has been failed by the people or failed by the office environment but it was not resolve, so go into the; please go into the details of the historical reasons that when it was started and how it was started and then what are the possible way out, so here the making the way out as a alternatives way out definitely, you need to talk about the problems with the people who are stakeholders in your organisation basically who have been working for the last very various decades or more than few years.

So, you need to talk with them to identify the possible way out because you may be new in the workplace, you may not know the each and every consequences or the root causes, so therefore identifying the possible way out, you have to talk with the stakeholders of the problem. Next is; is it controllable at your end that is the very important point which you need to think because unless it is not controllable to you, you cannot intervene.

Can you do anything? If you can do anything with the problem do it, otherwise it is better to avoid worrying about the problem or thinking or analysing too much about the problem, sometimes the problems which think too much or worry too much where we have very negligible amount of intervention and the scientist they have seen that the most of the time, the common people what they think or what they interact about 80% of the time where they do not have anything to do.

And only 20% of the time they spend quiet and they discuss and discourse only where they can do something, they can take some action, they can really change something, so think about those 80% where you can minimise those 80% to negligible amount and enhance more time to think and identify the problem which is controllable at your end and is not the problem also an opportunity?

Sometimes we see the problem as a bottleneck, as a barrier in our life but think about the inventions, think about the creativity and the innovations which happen in the last, starting from the civilisation and mostly in last few decades, the cause of those inventions and the discovery and the innovations were basically some problems which was faced by the people and to come out from that problem, people try to innovate, they try to create something new.

And that is what the opportunity they enjoyed, so it is important to see the problem as also opportunity, if it is controllable at your end so therefore, try to see the problem as a challenge.

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Problem as a 'Challenge'

- ❖ Medicines were invented to tackle disease
- ❖ Aeroplane was invented to resolve the time of travel
- ❖ Land use planning started to avoid industrial pollution in residential areas
- ❖ Walkability has been prioritized to minimise pollutions and vehicles
- ❖ Decentralisation as a solution for better governance
- ❖ Faster communication as a solution of better business

So, I give you some examples that were you know I mean various innovations were made, so medicines were invented to tackle the disease, aeroplane was invented to resolve the time of travel, for our urban governance, the land use planning started to avoid industrial pollution in residential area, when the Industrial Revolution came that time, various problematic areas, hazardous, pollutions, took place due to industrialisation.

And location of the industries within the residential or the near vicinity of the residential areas, to avoid that people started land use planning to segregate the residential area and other areas, so that was the origin of the land use planning, even though right now we are talking also about the mix land use planning but to in different way, so that was the reason why the to resolve the problem of the industrial pollution, the land use planning started.

Similarly, walkability has been prioritised to minimise the pollutions and the vehicles, when the motor started after the Industrial Revolution, people enjoyed it but after few decades or few years people realise that it is not 100% perfect and it has several manifestations and many various implications like pollutions, so to minimise the pollution, to limit the pollution to limit the vehicle or ownership, people started walkability.

The all the European cities are designed based on the walkability and non-motorised transportation, so that was another innovation and creativity, they applied in urban planning and

governance to avoid some problems due to industrialisation. In our country and other countries, decentralisation as the solution for better governance, it was failed that if the cities are governed from the top from the central government to the state government, the people who are residing at the grass root level they are not able to take the benefit of the governance.

That is why I have told you that in 74th Amendment, government of India that try to decentralise the power, decentralise the governance, decentralise the administration to the grassroots level to the municipalities and the panchayats, so that was the solution as a way out from the top down approach to achieve the better governance. Similarly, in today's context, faster communication as a solution of better business.

So, communication is faster, those who are attending this NPTEL course without coming directly to the IIT Roorkee campus or any other educational campus, you are; you might be seating at your drawing room, you might be travelling in a bus or train and enjoying or attending these courses, those who are even staying abroad, they are attending this courses, so without physically travelling or spending time, you are getting the not only education, all the business communication in a fraction of seconds.

So that is the magic of current technological advancement, now this technological advancement was created to faster the business and the growth of the people and that is why the current generation, the communication is so important, so this is only just few examples, you might have seen that to avoid the problems, people try to see the problem as opportunity and they try to create some solution which change the path of thinking of the human civilisation.

So at your work place, try to think that what are the problems and whether you can do anything for that problem, maybe you create some innovation, you do some intervention and you become the leader for the future, so after having said that now how we can face the challenges?

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Facing Challenges

- ❖ Try to see problems as the opportunity do do something
- ❖ Avoid owning all the problems
- ❖ Identify problems where you can intervene
- ❖ Prioritise the problems based on the importance and urgency
- ❖ Try to anticipate problems
- ❖ Making trustworthy teams to face problems together
- ❖ Make standardised actions for few recurrent problems/crisis
- ❖ Link problems with accountability and responsibility ✓

So, first is as I said that try to see problems as the opportunity, it is very difficult but try to practice it and after some time, few months later definitely if you practice you can see the problems as the opportunity to do something, avoid owning all the problems, not all the problems which is created in the world to be resolved by you and not all the problems should be owned by you.

So, whatever problems which can be owned by you at your professional level or personal level definitely, you should own and you should try to see as opportunity and intervene, not all, identify problems where you can intervene, I have talked already about this, prioritise the problem based on the importance and urgency. Now, there are problems which will come to you an urgent problem or crisis situation definitely, if those problems in urgent situations are at the very desperate level.

Or very urgent level which needs immediate attention for the people because you will be working at the grass root level under the urban governance definitely, you have to take intervention but my point is that can you prevent those crisis situation, can you if it is very important for your workplace for your city, can you plan for it, can you make a roadmap to avoid those problem?

So that whenever those problems comes in your actual life, you can take action for example, urban flooding, whenever urban flooding comes, every city authority after every monsoons, it becomes a crisis in the cities specially in Indias and global south and some of the other countries but if it is a more or less designated event which comes during the April, May, June, July or August, so can you plan for it?

So that can you give a dedicated man for skilled manpower, can you give them tools and techniques and equipment and training, so that whenever the rain falls and the rainy seasons come, they can take actions, so that it becomes not an urgent issue, so converting urgent issues into important issues make a plan, make a roadmap and take an action, so that you can avoid the urgency.

But it is; it may not be possible to avoid 100% of the urgent work or the crisis work but it is possible to minimise drastically from the urgent to important work, then try to anticipate the problems, as I told if you see that some problems are recurring and some problems may occur in the future, plan for it and try to visualise and anticipate for those problem. Then, making trust worthy teams to face problems together, you may not be able to face the problems alone.

If you are working in a city government definitely you have a team and make a team of trustworthy people, so that you can solve the problem in a preventive manner, make standardised action for few recurrent problems as I told like urban planning, like any accidents or disastrous, landslides which creates recurrent problem in the cities which disrupt the public life in terms of the basic infrastructure and the communication.

So, you can make standardised action for example, creation of the cell, competence cell, creation of the database, toolkits, creation of the essential equipment, so that people can take actions and link the problems with accountability and responsibility, please take a note that all the problems are not generated from the sky or from the scratch, if we at our personal level, we failed to perform in our daily work in workplace.

Definitely, we are generating some problems, so most of the cases, the problems are generated out of the non-performance of a person or a group, so therefore the failure of the work and failure of the performance to be linked with the creation of the problem definitely, it depends on how you are standardising the job situation and the that job situation and the responsibility and accountability at individual level, at the group level and how you can link it with the possible implications if the non-performance is there.

And those implications should include the crisis situation and the problems in your urban government, so linking problem with the accountability and responsibility is important, so these are the points where you can take the actions to face the challenge then take realistic decisions. Now, understanding problem and taking problem as I discussed is also not sufficient, at the end of the day when you are working as a city manager, you have to take decisions.

Now, how to take decisions in work life specially for the city managers, so that is what we are going to discussion.

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Decision making

- Impulses / Instinct
- Advice
- Research / Data
- Past Precedent
- No - decision.
- Parental message - Cons.
- Consensus

Now, decision making is a very major discussion which is nothing new in the discussion, it has been discussed in various forums, various research papers, various management schools, so I am not going into detail, going to give you very large amount of description of all the decision

making models but I am going to give you some basic framework by which you can take rightful decision to solve the problem.

So, I hope that you have been taking decision every day for your work life and personal life, so how you take decision? So, basically sometimes we I have talked with many people, many students, many professional, sometimes we take decisions based on our impulses or instinct that is what people say sometime, sometimes we take decision based on advice, sometimes we take decision based on our research and data.

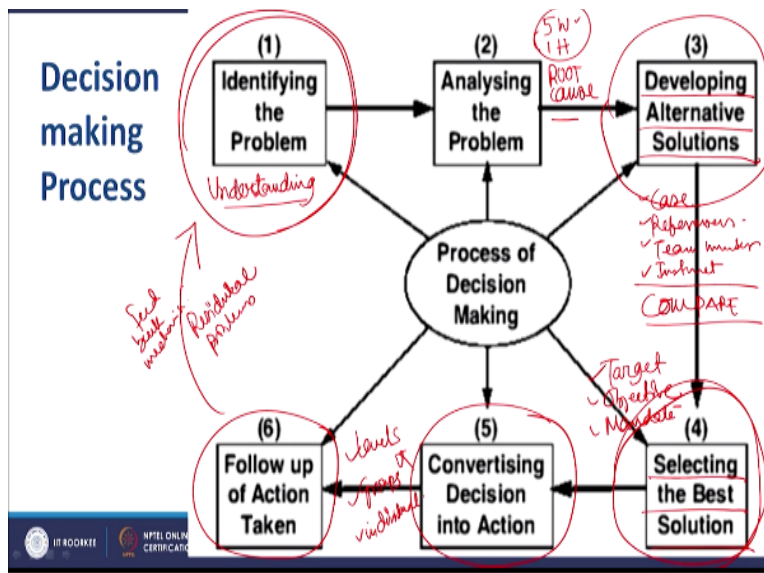
Sometimes, we take decision based on our past practice, sometimes we do not take decision, so this is another stand that we decide not to decide, maybe not taking decision is another very important decision, sometimes we take decision based on our parental message, the parental message is basically the message or the instructions we get from the parental figures like fathers or the seniors in the office or the very experienced person who has been working in the field for various years.

So, those kind of influences also works based on the cases and sometimes, we take the decision based on the consensus, so whatever you do whatever is your style, no model or no style is perfect in decision making, there could be excellence based on some situation, there could be failure at times but every failure is a foundation for taking further better decision that is what I can explain to you.

And all the cities are developed, all the cities are governed in a process of hundreds of decisions, some of the decisions are good, some of the decisions are bad, so whenever you are working at a urban situation, take boldly various decision and try to intervene, try to take action out of the decision, do not be fearful and do not be worry too much, take decisions. Now, based on that I just give you some logical process flowchart for the decision making.

So that you can get some idea that whatever is your style based on that flow chart, you follow a basic process and come to a decision, so let us see the process flowchart.

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So, in the first stage we try to identify that I have talked with time that identifying and I would like to mention here identifying and understanding, so understanding of the problem will basically give you 3, 4 answers of the question, question number 1; is the problem relevant to my workplace or my situation where I can intervene, will the problem will be owned by me or the others, is it controllable at my end, if all this questions you get a yes answer, then you start remaining process.

And also for the problem, you try to see that what are the opportunities related with the problems, so those questions should be answered in this stage 1 and in stage 2, analyse the problem, as I told you that asked the question with 5W's and 1 H that means, who, what, when, where and how and these are the questions you have to ask for the problem to identify the root cause that is the second stage.

In the third stage, to make a way out from the problem, you try; we try developing alternative solution now, in developing alternative solution sometimes most of the time, we make solutions in our mind either in conscious mind or in sub conscious mind, option A, B, C or whatever and we compare also, so we compared the alternative solution and then we select one solution, so here based on your data, you develop your alternative solution.

And you take your style whatever I discussed, sometimes we take references from the experience person, sometimes we take references from the cases, sometimes we take references from the people or the team member, so developing alternative solution based on your case earlier references and your team member, sometimes we allow our instinct or sixth sense to understand the alternative situations.

And then we compared the alternative solution now, in scientific process there are established model of decision making or where we take the after comparison of the all the alternatives, we select one alternatives, so those models are accepted for creating one decision pertaining to one particular technical problem for example, creation of new infrastructure, creation of a logistic solution, creation of a future trend of the land use planning something like that.

But when you are working in a urban governance, there are various situations where hundreds of variables will be there and it may not be possible every time that you apply a scientific models, so whatever timeframe you have in your work situation, make alternatives and make your own analysis of making and comparing them, so that you can ultimately choose the one. So, next stage will be selecting the best solution out of the comparison.

Now, how to identify the best solution, who will answer you that which one is the best, which one is the worst, now try to think about your target or your target or objective of your work or mandate, if you are working in the municipalities, definitely people is the final mandate, so please ask this question, who will get the benefit out of the decision, who are going to suffer out of the decision, who are going to take actions out of the decision or the choice.

And based on similar type of question, you assess the alternative and compare it and take a final decision or final selection, then converting the option into decision and action now, every decision will be accompanied with several actions and those actions are required at every level to intervene and to resolve the problem. Now, in the actions, list out of the actions at every levels, every groups and individual, right and then follow up of the action taken.

Follow up with the team, follow up with your own performance, own action taken, follow up with the individual person and then you go to the residual problem, if there are any individual problems and make a feedback mechanism, so that you can; so this in the general flowchart of a problem solving and decision making diagram. This diagram should be maintain at your own level and make your own process noted in your diary or note book.

So that whenever you are referring the past analysis of the decision making process, you can refer and improve further on that.

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Decision to Action

- ❖ Actions at your end ✓
- ❖ Delegation of responsibility ✓
- ❖ Avoid procrastination
- ❖ Be firm on your decision ✓
- ❖ Be courageous to take action ✓ *Confident*
- ❖ Learn from the mistakes → *Stages for growth*
- ❖ Share experiences

Now, having said that let me tell you few tips or few actions which can be done for converting decision to an action, first is actions at your end, what you can do; a delegation of the responsibility what you can delegate to the team member, avoid procrastination, sometimes we take decision but we do not delegate or take action after that so, once the decisions are made, do not procrastinate make it faster either you take action or you let others take the action for that decision.

Be firm on your decision, once you are taken decision based on several analyses and the alternative scenarios, be firm on your decision, do not be confusing and the fluctuating on your decision, be firm and be confident, be courageous to take the decision, be confident, sometimes

when you are working at the urban sector, there are situations; trivial situations where taking action in a trivial situation could be problematic, risky.

So, assess the risk before you take the decision and how you can mitigate those risks but once you are; you have taken the decision, be courageous and confident to take the action and you have the power to take those actions, learn from the mistakes; mistakes are basically a stages of the growth, so do not identify the mistakes, it is the stages for growth, self and the organisational and share experiences.

Whatever you are doing definitely you must share with your colleagues and whatever colleagues are doing try to share and learn from the colleagues experiences and servant leadership, the earlier model for the leadership was top down, leader used to give instruction to the team member and team member used to follow but now a job of the leader not only to give the instruction and the monitoring but also to give mentorship and to give and to serve them to; to help them to enable them to facilitate them, so that they can perform.

So, it is not only the instruction or the top down, it is also working with the team, managing the team as a team member, so from a instruction based propaganda or the paradigm from a; to a friendship or a collaboration based paradigm which works for the leadership when you take the decision and work in a city situation, this is all what I have discussed about the problems solving and the decision making.

Today, we have discussed one of the very useful competency for the city managers in problem solving and decision making, we have told that to identify and understand the problem as an opportunity and the problem where you can intervene, it is controllable to at your end that is important at the first stage and if you find those problems are controllable at your end and it is an opportunity for your life to do something.

Definitely, you can further do the decision making exercise, in the decision making exercise there are several stage, first is the identifying the problem, second is the analysis of the problem, then making alternative situations of the alternative situations and the solution for the resolving

the problem, then comparison and identifying the best situation based on some criterias and taking the best situation and converting them as a decision; final decision.

And make the actions at all level for all people and groups and converting those actions into monitoring and follow up, so that you implement those actions in real world and that is how you can convert the problem into opportunity, convert the opportunity into decision making process, from the decision making process, you can convert it to an action and from the action you can convert it to the excellence.

And in this process as I told that there will be mistakes, there will be short comings but unless you practice, you do not understand and experience and that is how we grow and that is how the great cities were built in in the throughout the world, it was not built in one day, so definitely I am hopeful that at your end, who are working and day to day basis very difficult job for the as a urban situation as a city manager, so you can take right decisions starting from the small decision to large decision to medium decision and you can also excel.

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Next LECTURE

54. Effective Negotiation

In the next lecture, we are going to discussion another very important competency which is negotiation, in this decision making process, you might have found that some of the decisions are influenced because of the conflicting situations or the differences of the opinion and all the situations need an effective negotiation which can resolve the problem in a better way, so what

are the negotiation skills involved in urban manager or urban management that is what we are going to discuss in the next day, so thank you very much for attending this lecture.