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How Should a Government Be?

Jaideep Prabhu's third book How Should a Government Be? explores some of the lessons in innovative governance that the private and public sectors can learn from each other.

Jaideep Prabhu, professor of business and enterprise at the Judge Business School at the University of Cambridge and friend of GGI, has spent much of his career studying innovation in the private sector. A question he has been asked many times is whether the same principles can be applied to both private and public sectors. His conclusion? Yes they can.

Jaideep has just published his third book, called How Should a Government Be? The New Levers of State Power, in which he explores what it means to be innovative with governance and how governments could culture this learning and development style in the economy. Jaideep says the key lies in the public sector looking for trade-offs between effectiveness, efficiency and public freedoms.

Adjectives of innovation

Integrated care is about giving people the support they need, joined up across local councils, the NHS, and other partners. It removes traditional divisions between hospitals and family doctors, between physical and mental health, and between NHS and council services. The aim is that people can live healthier lives and get the care and treatment they need, in the right place, at the right time.

Integrated care system (ICS)

For Jaideep, there are five adjectives associated with mastering a truly innovative culture: responsive, inclusive, experimental, entrepreneurial and, of course, innovative.

- Responsive state – shows us that all planning and development needs to be citizen-centric, working from the outside in to design solutions and involving citizens. This is especially important in social care.
- Inclusive state – balancing the needs of different groups of citizens. Denmark has balanced the interests of employers and job seekers, which has led to new ideas like universal basic income.



- Experimental state – new solutions should be trialed in pilots to reduce the risk of failure and then evaluate at scale. Data is key here, with behaviour insights used to understand what works and what doesn't.
- Entrepreneurial state – be proactive and engage early with stakeholders in various technologies.
- Innovative state – creating a culture of innovation in government.

Frugal innovation

One of the main reasons that innovation is now available to the public sector is digital technology. Connection and tools have brought an age of frugal innovation, where small teams can deliver things that previously only large teams and whole governments could do.

An example is M-Pesa, the Kenyan Central Bank, which was instrumental in engaging with Vodafone's proposal to revolutionise the payment system with mobile phones. Many would have moved away from this because Vodafone is not a bank, but by engaging M-Pesa has revolutionised banking.

Buurtzorg shows the way

An incredible example of innovation transforming a more complex system is Buurtzorg in the Netherlands – a healthcare organisation with a nurse-led model of holistic care that we covered in an earlier illumination.

Buurtzorg was the brainchild of Jos de Blok, who has a background in economics and then became a nurse. He said: "At the beginning of 90s, based on ideas of management a lot of things changed in the health system in the Netherlands. Patients were expecting more and becoming more dissatisfied, which led to many nurses leaving their roles."

Together with friends Jos decided to develop his own technology so that information and knowledge can be shared in the community, to relieve nurses of administrative tasks and allow them to monitor their own performance. Alongside this they developed a principles-based organisation linked to community healthcare. They had a set of products that shared a vital principle: that nurses are able to create the right interventions to get the right outcome for patients.

The key to the Buurtzorg model is that there are no systems and structures of management, nor targets or goals from a board. Each neighbourhood team can set up these community health services in any way that people want to do it they can.

Buurtzorg has been incredibly successful, becoming the largest community care organisation in Holland. It's also been voted the best employer in Holland for five consecutive years.

The Dutch ministry of health supports the system and has stimulated other organisations to work in a similar way. And it could work anywhere.

In short, this innovative approach shows the value of simplifying things rather than making them more complicated. Of making an environment where people can see and own what they are doing.

Not trusting people eats up a lot of resources – so why not remove this barrier by introducing trust?

illuminations



Illuminations

- Developing and leading an innovative culture may sound difficult but with the right lens and approach it's possible for any organisation, large or small, to think differently.
- Trust can remove many barriers and save resources. Trusting your staff to fail as well as succeed should open the doors to innovation.
- Simplification can lead to a real shift in results. Start by understanding what the citizen and people delivering a service want and let them lead it. Transformation will follow.

If you have any questions or comments about this briefing, please call us on 07732 681120 or email advice@good-governance.org.uk

How Should a Government Be? The New Levers of State Power by Jaideep Prabhu is available now from Profile Books.