A Critical Evaluation of the Prevalence of the Cost of Dysfunctional Governance with Relevant Examples.

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BY

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**Introduction**

The term dysfunctional is often heard of in relation to things that are not moving right or there appears to be conflict in how matters or issues should be handled. In many institutions, government bodies, and families face the issue of dysfunctionality, however, the scope is to then identify what makes a country, institution become dysfunctional in the way it is governed. Research on governance examines the initiation, the maintenance, and the efﬁcacy of collective action to fulﬁll some political, economic, or social purpose. Institutions, conceptualized as rule structures, are the vehicles for undertaking such collective endeavors (Prakash & Potoski, 2016a). Institutions facilitate collective endeavors by shaping individual-level incentives, establishing norms of appropriate behavior, and stabilizing actors’ expectations about other actors (Prakash & Potoski, 2016b).

The aim of this paper is to evaluate the prevalence of dysfunctional governance and its costs in organizations. In order to do this, this paper is structured in the following way; the next section will discuss dysfunctional governance at government level, then institutional level like schools and universities and finally at the family level, the last section will discuss the costs implied in the dysfunctional governance of those institutions.

*Dysfunctional Governance at State level*

Areas of limited statehood where the state is absent or dysfunctional are rarely ungoverned or ungovernable spaces. The provision of rules and regulations, as well as of public goods and services – governance – does not necessarily depend on the existence of functioning state institutions (Börzel & Risse, 2016). Borzel and Risse (2016) further state that the main challenge in areas of limited statehood, which are often characterized by social heterogeneity and deep social and cultural cleavages (particularly in post‐conflict societies) is to move to generalized trust beyond the local level and to “imagined communities among strangers,” despite dysfunctional state institutions. For instance, in countries such as Uganda in the early 1970’s to late 80’s where civil war and strife prevailed, there was a government that was dysfunctional in nature. The other instance was the late 90’s and early 2000’s with the violence in northern Uganda by the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) rebel group led by Joseph Kony. Some argue that the society embedded in the cultural norms and low trust in the government was a factor that enables Kony evade justice for a number of years. During that time, numerous lives were lost and countless abduction of innocent girls was the norm of the day. The cost of a dysfunctional government can be great indeed, and as most of the affected area is recovering and improving with aid from foreign governments and agencies helping to rehabilitate the communities and societies (Langseth, 1995).

In turning the tables round during this era, several reforms have come about to mitigate the strife and losses. In fact, the international donor community has paid increasing attention to reform issues. It has called on recipient governments to participate in the design and implementation of these programmes (Langseth, 1995). One such programme is the Structured Adjustment Programme (SAP) by the World Bank/ International Monetary Fund (IMF) which places emphasis on the economic liberalization and scant attention to the political arena, causing a slight concern about the stagnation of the growth of the civil society in Uganda (Oloka‐Onyango & Barya, 1997).

The re-incarnation of kingdoms and cultural or ethnic rulers in Uganda contributed to a form of dysfunctional governance in the sense that the re-establishing of the Buganda Kingdom (centrally located within the capital city of Uganda) caused some earlier constitutional reforms and compromises over the process of the political transition in Uganda (Oloka-Onyango & Barya, 1997). Okola-Onyango and Barya (1997) further state that debate on the inclusion of cultural rulers as part of civil societies is still on going with some arguing that they cultural institutions are’… dysfunctional, outmoded and a hindrance to the advancement of civil society in Uganda’ (p.6). The question as to whether these cultural groups are to be included is often left unanswered as it poses a threat to how different groups will be represented at the parliamentary level.

The cost of this decision is felt through the economic burden of caring for these cultural figureheads as many have diplomatic status and the State through internal affairs is charged with the duty to look after them. In a nation with over 42 tribes each with cultural leaders, the cost becomes very dear.

*Dysfunctional Governance at Institutional Level.*

Different institutions are governed differently depending on the industry, for this paper it will be limited to the educational sector with an example of South African schools post-apartheid.

In the United States, Congress has worked hard to make schools effective by mandating state testing with penalties levied on the schools should the students fail to perform satisfactorily in the state mandated tests. These students can then be moved to other schools in the hopes of having better performance. This is an example of functional governance in schools (Mawdsley, Bipath, & Mawdsley, 2014). The options available to students in ineffective urban schools in South Africa are virtually nonexistent. Effective schools in South Africa depend on the leadership in the school to effect meaningful changes (Mawdsley et al., 2014).

South Africa has adopted an approach to determining functional schools different from that in the United States under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB). However, the NCLB’s insistence that schools set goals for annual yearly progress and use tests to monitor school improvement has raised concerns as to whether the NCLB “is a Trojan horse for nefarious political designs” (Liebman & Sabel, 2003, p.3). In many U.S. states, NCLB-mandated tests, in addition to measuring student progress, are often also used as exit exams to meet state statutory requirements for high school graduation, an application that affects more than 70% of all high school students, a process that has raised concerns as to whether schools develop strategies to exclude students, likely to fail tests, from taking those tests altogether (Pullin, n.d.). This contributes as a form of dysfunctional governance on the school policy level and in deed many parent have gone to court over it.

However, with the end to apartheid in 1994, has not marked the end to discriminatory inequalities in South African schools, especially those located in the disadvantaged urban and township settings populated almost completely with disadvantaged Black students (Mawdsley et al., 2014). Thrupp (1999) noted that post-apartheid Black schools faced “savage inequalities” because these schools, located in areas with high levels of unemployment, and crime as well as poor housing and health conditions, were required to take on a significant caring role if academic goals were to be achieved.

Historically Black schools face other challenges. Although on any given day, 1.7% of teachers in historically White schools are absent, the number for Black schools varies from 15.5% to 25.5 % (Booyse, Le Roux, Seroto, & Wolhuter, 2011). Even an increase in per-student government funds from R6300 in 2005/06 to R9160 in 2008/09 has seen the number of students passing the ME (also known as the Senior Examination certificate) drop from 351,503 in 2006 to 344, 794 in 2008 (Booyse et al., 2011, p. 283). This goes to show that in a dysfunctional setting, funding does not necessarily improve performance. The results from the study carried out show that there was one principal that was able to turn a school functional in a dysfunctional setting proving that it can be done (Mawdsley et al., 2014).

Unlike in the U.S, students in dysfunctional South African schools have no chance to transfer to the more functional schools, however, what is important to note for South Africa is to note that, despite the great distances to effective schools and the grinding poverty that exists in urban and township settings, it is the imperative of effective leadership that is the most important mechanism for effecting change in the school setting.

*Dysfunctional Governance in Families*

According to Beck (2007), Dysfunctional is a word that warns us that we may be hurt by something we can do nothing about. So this stuffy term, suggestive of the dispassionate, disinterested research activity we think goes on in a laboratory, becomes the most venomous, condemnatory label we can apply in the social world around us. It explains why people around us are losers, why we must avoid them, and how such ostracism is humane rather than vindictive. It's not our fault, and any fair judge would understand why we have to attack these troubled troublemakers (Beck, 2007).

Beck (2007) refers to the British royal family as a group different from common people with an explicitly different subculture, remote from the publicly visible world and invested with formidable power and privilege. Although they are only a family, they fit the classic definition of a minority group. Although we use our common cultures to arm ourselves against calamities, it is sometimes the culture shared by the group that exposes it to the most censure from outside. In the case of the British royal family, it is the Queen, who is a hero defending her family; in 2007 after the death of Princess Diana, defended the family’s lack of emotional display thus against a preconceived subculture of how grief should be displayed (Beck, 2007).

In the African context, dysfunctional families are often seen as those with suffering from an epidemic such as HIV/AIDS. A disproportionate number of African adolescent males have little knowledge about sex; They make uninformed choices and develop poor moral standards, which account for alcohol and unsafe sex (Kheswa, 2015). Literature reveals that if drug-friendly environments and societal factors such as cultural beliefs (gender inequality) are not properly addressed by parents, South Africa could be robbed of a future generation due to HIV/AIDS (Kheswa, 2015). Kheswa, (2015) further states that uninvolved parents and dysfunctional families contribute towards teenage fatherhood and subsequent imprisonment, poverty and impaired psychological well-being hence increasing on the burden of the state to look after them.

Pequegnat and Bray (1997) asserts that families can be important in deterring the spread of the disease because of their pivotal role in education and training about sexual behavior and health promotion. Families also serve a critical role in helping their HIV-infected members cope with disease; thus creating a support system.

In Uganda, the HIV prevalence rate was reported at 10%, a rate lower than any other East African country (Mulder et al., 1994). In a comparative study between Uganda and Botswana, Allen and Heald (2004) argued that the promotion of condoms at an early stage proved to be counter‐productive in Botswana, whereas the lack of condom promotion during the 1980s and early 1990s contributed to the relative success of behaviour change strategies in Uganda. Other important factors included national and local‐level leadership, the engagement (or alienation) of religious groups and local healers and, most controversially, procedures of social compliance (Allen & Heald, 2004). Allen and Heald (2004) further state that in Uganda, the involvement of leaders both local and religious helped the affected families feel less disfranchised, and the openness and communication led to better behaviour changes.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, the dysfunctional governance of a state, institution and family have varied effects on the community and globally. In the case of HIV/AIDS endemic, there have been examples of good and bad governance at the state level in the implantation of policies that are geared to curb the spread and prevalence. In the case of Uganda, the families also adhered to the call of the state bodies in helping the youth and orphans cope with the loss and curb the spread.

At the state level, there are more costs involved such as political agendas with the instance of Uganda moving from a one party system to multiparty systems offering up more positions and session in parliament that have in turn led to more tax burden on the tax payers.

For the educational system, the case of South Africa clearly highlights that the costs of trying to rectify a dysfunctional system are indeed very high, however, with attention to the leadership in the schools, dysfunctional school systems can be turned into functional ones.

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