

Governance – Effective Measures To Eliminate ‘The Elephant in The Room’

Bad Governance is increasingly being regarded as one of the root causes of all evils and suffering within societies; but for strange reasons, the matter is avoided as a priority subject for discussion. **Bad Governance** is complete opposite of **Good Governance** and involves abuse of human rights, corruption, lack of transparency, lack of responsiveness, ethnicity, and lack of accountability among other ills.

Studies conducted over a period of time provide the empirical evidence which supports the argument that **Bad Governance** and corruption are symptoms of leadership and institutional failure.

We find that leadership changes are either frequent, or infrequent, and in both cases, these leaders prefer to govern where institutions are very weak or do not exist, so that they will not be accountable for their corrupt behaviour and abuse of office.

With the abuse of effective checks and balances, corruption, ethnicity, lack of transparency, lack of responsiveness and lack of accountability continues unabated. These are some of the very difficult challenges and trying situations as a community we obviously face; but due to strange reasons or inferiority complex, *wananchi* tend to avoid discussing the issue openly and candidly.

The gravity of the situation we are in now, requires Kenyans of all shades to have a clear vision on what exactly needs to be done, and they have to come out and voice their frustration without relenting until the **‘Elephant in the Room’** is sorted out.

In an attempt to stop ***Bad Governance***, development researchers and practitioners have focused on ***Good Governance*** as both a means of achieving development and a development objective in itself.

First-of-all, the World Bank has defined ***Good Governance*** as “epitomized by predictable, open and enlightened policy making; a bureaucracy imbued with a professional ethos; an executive arm of government accountable for its actions; and a strong civil society participating in public affairs; and all behaving under the rule of law.”(World Bank 1994). It is characterised by participation, consensus orientation, rule of law, transparency, accountability, responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, equity and inclusiveness.

However, ***Bad Governance*** which apparently Kenyans do not want to discuss openly, is the inability of a public institution to manage public affairs and public resources; failure of a Government to meet the needs of society while making the best use of all resources at their disposal. (Midjk An: 2014). ***Bad Governance*** is characterised by corruption, crime, no freedom of expression etc. in Public organizations.

Corruption: Refers to the misuse or the abuse of Public office for private gain (World Bank 2000, UNDP, 1999). Klitgaard had this to note about corruption. ***Bad Governance*** which for obvious reasons we tend to avoid discussing in the open exists everywhere – in the Private as well as the Public sector, in rich countries and poor – is salutary because it helps us avoid unhelpful stereotypes.

Corruption can come in various forms and a wide array of illicit behaviour such as bribery, extortion, fraud, nepotism, graft, speed money, pilferage, theft and embezzlement, falsification of records, kickbacks, influencing peddling and election campaign contributions. (Klitgaard: 1988).

Abuse of Human Rights: Human rights recognize the inherent value of each person, regardless of background, where we live, how we look like, what we think or what we believe. (Albin – Lackey: 2013). In the presence of ***Bad Governance***, human rights are not respected. A few people in higher Government positions take advantage of those at the lower regardless of their rights to abuse Public office.

No Freedom of Expression: This is closely linked to abuse of human rights, in that when people's freedom of expression is not respected, their views will equally not be heard. Citizens are not really allowed to comment freely on Government affairs. In such a case, communication process is top-down, meaning that the Public only receives instructions and commands on what to do, but can never make suggestions.

High Level of Centralization: When the governing system is highly centralized, a very small number of people make decisions that affect the whole nation. For example, the Ministry of Education involved only a few people in decision-making on Curriculum Reform process – leaving the Public views unheard. This has run the implementation of Competence Based Curriculum in Pre-primary and Lower primary in troubled waters. Public participation in matters of national interest has to be encouraged so that *wananchi* can have a sense of ownership of the decision reached.

In **Bad Governance**, there is no transparency and accountability, this means that the decisions that the Government makes are not according to the rules and regulations. In this kind of governance, leaders or those in power are at liberty of doing whatever they want because no one is going to question them. In addition, citizens are denied access to the information of Government agenda, and this can lead to massive corruption.

Rachel (2012) argues that “corruption is as a result of lack of transparency and it creates instability and unpredictable outcome of governance.” Lack of transparency in the way operations of Government are conducted, is an indication of ***Bad Governance***.

For example, the Government has not told the nation the current state of the multi-billion shillings School Laptop Project, and why it has stalled, nor has the Government briefed the public why textbooks publishers are still producing and supplying books to schools yet these institutions are flooded with books.

In addition, Kenyans are never consulted whenever the Cabinet Secretary for The National Treasury signs up for loans from door countries. An ordinary Kenyan (taxpayer) will not know the interest rate such loans accrue after some time.

According to World Bank, the absence of accountability by Public officials, either to their superiors or to the community they serve, remains a universal phenomenon. At the top, no attempt is made to ensure the quality of Public service and to enforce discipline on those who do not meet their responsibilities. This process operates from the top-down to each tier of the system to its base. There is no system in place for stakeholders or a community to act collectively to extract accountability from the service providers.

Commonly in Africa, there is ***Bad Governance*** and political institutions operate on top-down delivery of information. This means that citizens do not participate in decision-making but rather, are just given what the Government is intended to do without questioning the status quo by those who are affected. Political institutions also lack transparency and accountability.

Bad Governance is coordinated by aggression that is violence, deception, cheating against the wills of many citizens who are not using deceitful methods to benefit their interests. ***Bad Governance*** is characterised by corruption, crime, no freedom of expression etc. in Public organizations. “Corruption creates instability and unpredictability in governance”, (Albin-Lackey, 2013). From the clear picture of view, you can notice that ***Bad Governance*** is not likely to produce good services to its citizens because it does not have elements that attributes to ***Good Governance***.

Structures of administrative units in an organization/institution can also influence or contribute immensely to ***Good*** or ***Bad Governance*** – be it Public or Private. For the last 62 years of existence, Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT) has operated above-board, and beyond reproach by resisting ***Bad Governance*** which is characterised by arbitrary policy-making, unaccountable bureaucracies, unenforced or unjust arbitration systems, the abuse of executive power and widespread corruption within the Union membership.

One would be tempted to ask: How has KNUT leadership been able to successfully steer the giant Union to greater heights despite political despotism in the country, and a nation which has continued to score poorly in Global Corruption Index as indicated by Transparency International (TI). For example, Kenya scored 27 points out of 100 on the 2018 Corruption Perception Index reported by TI. Corruption Index in Kenya averaged 22.82 points from 1996 until 2018, reaching an all-time-high of 28 points in 2017 and recorded low of 19 points in 2002. Latest Index shows that Kenya is ranked 143 out of 180 countries sampled. Truly, this has not affected KNUT, and it is not about to since the leadership of the Union is grounded in the rule of **Law**.

KNUT leadership is structured in the sense that, there are several units of governance which cannot allow ***Bad Governance*** to permeate – starting with the National Office which has 11 National Steering Committee members, supported by five Executive Officers. The National Office is over-sighted by the National Executive Council (NEC) which comprises 31 members drawn from eight regions based on the former provinces. The NEC is over-sighted by a special body – the Advisory Council whose representatives are drawn from the 110 branches of the Union. Then, there is the mother of all these bodies – The National Delegates Conference. The custodian of KNUT properties are three Trustees. The Trustees have the control of the funds of the Union, but may delegate their powers to any officers of the Union to act as signatories to operate a bank account.

With a complex governance system which provides checks and balances at every level of leadership, it becomes extremely difficult to condone ***Bad Governance*** at KNUT. Important to note, all tribes, cadres of teachers, gender, the disabled and teachers' professional organizations are effectively represented in the leadership of the Union, all-the-way from the grassroots to the National Office. Political, cultural and religious affiliations of members doesn't interfere with the day-to-day running of the trade movement. Issues of corruption in the society are discussed openly and candidly by Union members.

Besides, KNUT strictly observes the eight elements of ***Good Governance***. The characteristics are: **(a)** Participatory, **(b)** Consensus, **(c)** Orientation, **(d)** Accountability, **(e)** Transparency, **(f)** Responsiveness, **(g)** Effective and Efficient, **(h)** Equitable and Inclusive – and always follow the **Rule of Law**.

Characteristics of Good Governance

Participation: All men and women should have a voice in decision-making, either directly or through legitimate intermediate institutions that represent their interests. Such broad participation is built on freedom of association and speech, as well as capacities to participate constructively.

Rule of Law: Legal frameworks should be fair and enforced impartially, particularly the laws on human rights.

Transparency: Transparency is built on the free flow of information. Processes, institutions and information are directly accessible to those concerned with them, and enough information is provided to understand and monitor them.

Responsiveness: Institutions and processes should try to serve all stakeholders.

Consensus Orientation: Good Governance mediates differing interests to reach a broad consensus on what is in the best interests of the group and, where possible, on policies and procedures.

Equity: All men and women have opportunities to improve or maintain their well-being.

Effectiveness and Efficiency: Processes and institutions produce results that meet needs while making the best use of resources.

Accountability: Decision-making in Government, the Private sector and Civil society organizations are accountable to the Public, as well as to institutional stakeholders. This accountability differs depending on the organizations and whether the decision is internal or external to an organization.

Strategic Vision: Leaders and the Public have a broad and long-term perspective on good governance and human development, along with a sense of what is needed for such development. There is also an understanding of the historical, cultural and social complexities in which that perspective is grounded.

Thank You !

Thank You all !

Wish You a Fruitful and Rewarding Conference !