

OBSTRUCTIONS TO DEVELOPMENT CALLS FOR A NEW APPROACH IN NAMIBIA



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Biographical information

The author's research interests include corruption, governance, regional economic development and entrepreneurship. He studied at the University of Stellenbosch and obtained Master's degrees in Business Management and Administration as well as in Public Management and Administration. The title of his doctoral dissertation is "Systemic corruption and corrective change management strategies: A study of the co-producers of systemic corruption and its negative impact on socio-economic development". The author joined the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) in 2003. He participates in swimming, running and canoeing, is a keen reader and likes camping and travelling.

ABSTRACT

In the process of developing Namibia with the fourth most skewed income distribution in the world, obstructions emerge. If such obstructions resonate across different drivers, serious problems emerge that affect the wholeness of our society. Such problems cannot be analysed, because they form a 'knot or mess' that cannot be untangled. Such problems need hard structural intervention, complimented with softer behaviour changes, such as maximising stakeholder networking and changing the role of central government and public officials.

Key words: development, primary obstructions, secondary obstructions, networked governance

Obstructions to development calls for a new approach in namibia

In dysfunctional societies, it is common to struggle with systemic imbalances such as poverty, unemployment and corruption. Moral and strategic leadership in such countries is often compromised and is an inevitable outcome

of vacuums of power and destabilisation during transformation towards independence and democratisation. During such turbulence, fault lines in dysfunctional societies are highlighted. Examples include poverty and skewness in income distribution. With a Gini-coefficient of 61% (the lower the less skewness) Namibia is the country with the fourth most skewed income

distribution in the world. Such imbalances do have the potential to spiral into negative recurring loops, contributing towards distrust between 'the haves and have nots'. In order to address such challenges, leadership is paramount. Visionary, moral and transformational leadership is the most important driver in the process of change, as discussed in a previous article. In this arti-

Continued on next page

services are available in abundance to everybody that needs and desires it (Coetzee, 2012, p. 51). Those that do control the drivers of the economy do not want to share such control. They try to maximise access to and control of land, resources, entrepreneurship and markets. Control of the factors of production is paramount for the captains of industries to gain a competitive edge over competitors, even monopolise markets so that they can pocket excessive profits to grow their businesses and/or to use it for their exclusive benefits. As opposed to those that control the factors of production, the 'have-nots' struggle to make a living, they do not necessarily have formal qualifications to enter the formal society, they are locked into a struggle to survive. For them life it is about finding a job, fair pay for work done and to rent or own a home as part of a basic need to have a roof over their heads. Those that cannot afford decent accommodation may seek other alternatives to obtain access to it. For example, the Affirmative Repositioning (AR) group that occupied land illegally and threatened government with violence if their demand for land has not met before 31 July 2015.

The second question is: Why do people strive for truth, knowledge and acquiring technological skills? Information and knowledge are needed for increasing understanding and insight, and meeting one of the higher-order needs that Maslow called 'self-actualisation'. Although people are not born equal in terms of potential, everybody should have the right of access to equal opportunities.

The first question is: Why do people strive for economic wellbeing? Not all goods and services are available in abundance to everybody that needs and desires it (Coetzee, 2012, p. 51). Those that do control the drivers of the economy do not want to share such control. They try to maximise access to and control of land, resources, entrepreneurship and markets. Control of the factors of production is paramount for the captains of industries to gain a competitive edge over competitors, even monopolise markets so that they can pocket excessive profits to grow their businesses and/or to use it for their exclusive benefits. As opposed to those that control the factors of production, the 'have-nots' struggle to make a living, they do not necessarily have formal qualifications to enter the formal society, they are locked into a struggle to survive. For them life it is about finding a job, fair pay for work done and to rent or own a home as part of a basic need to have a roof over their heads. Those that cannot afford decent accommodation may seek other alternatives to obtain access to it. For example, the Affirmative Repositioning (AR) group that occupied land illegally and threatened government with violence if their demand for land has not met before 31 July 2015.

that enable them to be creative and innovative. Drivers for development are complementary to each other. They are of equal importance. In the process of development, obstructions emerge in an imperfect world of systems that have inherent weaknesses. For example, in terms of the economy, demand and supply is rarely in balance.



“As much as I applaud the new government on its efforts to eradicate poverty, it is imperative that our approach should be not only poverty, but also beyond poverty.”

of development, why obstructions emerge during the process of development, and how obstructions interact to create serious problems such as alienation and polarisation. **Drivers of development** All development should be inclusive and sustainable in order for people to live meaningful lives. All people seek fulfilment, to be inspired, and to make their own choices in life, not to depend on others for handouts. In the process of development, people should be capacitated to increase their ability to look after themselves, their families and to plough back into their communities. From a social systems approach, Gharajedaghi (1982, p. 64) said that the drivers of development and its purpose in any society should be the following: **Economics** to produce goods and services in abundance and make them accessible to all people. **Knowledge science and technology** to make knowledge and technology accessible to all people, so that they have optimum insight and understanding about societal challenges and what their contributions should be to address such challenges. **Politics** to create a common concern amongst all people in their communities and other institutions so that they have influence and power over issues that affect their lives. **Ethics, morality and spirituality** to create peace and harmony for all people, so that they can experience mutual love, respect and harmony. **Aesthetics** to inspire all people to live meaningful and fulfilled lives in an environment

Continued from previous page

What they do with their potential is their own choice, as long as they are not restricted comparatively. For example, the apartheid regime in Namibia discriminated against all races and ethnic groups, for the exclusive benefit of white domination. Such discrimination included restricted access to and quality of education, distortion of and restricted access to information, which caused distrust between ethnic and cultural groups in Namibia.



Basic Income Grant campaign in Namibia

The third question is: Why do people strive for fairness and justice in governance? Power and influence are not shared equally amongst people in communities and groups. Some groups and/or people benefit proportionally more than other from their positions of power. For example, the executive in Namibia is superior to the legislature, because they are not accountable to parliament. They are accountable to the president that appoints them. The executive is dominating the legislature, because with our proportional representative system, they are not obliged to listen to the people. They cannot be dismissed by parliament for not executing the policies and programmes of the legislature, e.g. State Owned Enterprises that do not perform. Cabinet can only be dismissed by the President. The accountability of the executive leadership in Namibia has been compromised that impact negatively on the execution of policies and programmes in which people do not have influence.

The fourth question is: Why do people strive for goodness, harmony, morals and value-driven circumstances? People who think alike form their own groups with their own values; which is natural to the process of social group behaviour. Groups that are discriminated against, e.g. ethnic minorities, feel insecure. For example, the genocide of between 50% and 70% of the Herero, and Nama during the German colonialisation of Namibia in the early 1900's. These minority groups strive for fairness, equal opportunities. They demand an official recognition of and compensation from the German government for injustices of the past. They want obstructions removed that block their development so that they can develop on par with other groups that have benefitted from historical unjustness to groups other than the Herero or Nama and/or not discriminated against.

The fifth and last question is: Why do people strive for

beauty and innovation, and for association with others? It is human nature to associate with other people. It is a basic human need to have a sense of belonging, to have an identity that provides meaning to their lives. People express their identity in innovative and creative ways. For example, African collectivism such as ubuntu is based on a sense of belonging. A person's life can only have meaning when such a person is of value to other, 'I am because of you'. However, some people's lives in a crime prone and poverty-stricken environment such as slums where about 33% of Namibians is located, is of such a struggle for survival that it is not abnormal that they lose hope for a better future. It is not strange that such people become apathetic towards formal society. For example, the neglect and dumping of unwanted babies in rubbish bins in Namibia is a reflection that some people have lost hope of a better future. They feel removed and isolated from formal society. Our society does not accommodate their right



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ample, the youth distrust the ability of local government authorities and their leaders to make affordable accommodation accessible. Low voter participation in local government elections, as low as 14%, is an indication that the youth is not interested in politics. They want employment and land to make a decent living, and they are frustrated with the formal systems in society that seem to discriminate against them. The youth is apathetic about politics; they are alienated from formal society that does not meet their needs.

Obstructions affecting the wholeness of Namibian society

Secondary problems such as alienation can resonate with other secondary problems. For example, when alienated people form groups with distinctive cultures, norms and symbols for the exclusive benefit of such groups, polarisation takes place. Such polarisation is demonstrated by labelling people, e.g. of different drivers interact, as land grabbers and enemies of the state. Polarisation is detrimental to the development of emergent properties. For example, people that feel alienated or separated from formal society, Emergent properties of the whole are properties of the whole meaning such serious obstructions affect the wholeness of the Namibian society.

Primary obstructions

Each driver of development has three possible categories of dysfunction that can merge, also known as obstructions to development. These obstructions are labelled emergent as reflected in properties in Table 1: Ackoff-Gharajedagi Five Dimensional Design. This Table outlines each driver, its possible dysfunctions and properties. Such dysfunctions are also known as primary obstructions that include absolute exclusion (poverty), relative exclusion (disparity) and total exclusion (deprivation). These primary obstructions can interact, for example, absolute poverty (economic driver) and normlessness (ethical driver). If primary obstructions of different drivers interact, they contribute to serious or second-order obstructions, emergent properties. For example, people that feel alienated or separated from formal society, Emergent properties of the whole are properties of the whole meaning such serious obstructions affect the wholeness of the Namibian society.

Unaffordable urban land, housing and unemployment impact negatively on the trust between Namibians and representatives of government and public sector officials. For example, the youth distrust the ability of local government authorities and their leaders to make affordable accommodation accessible. Low voter participation in local government elections, as low as 14%, is an indication that the youth is not interested in politics. They want employment and land to make a decent living, and they are frustrated with the formal systems in society that seem to discriminate against them. The youth is apathetic about politics; they are alienated from formal society that does not meet their needs.