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Learning and Innovation for Governance Reform Sustainability

Why is it that State sovereigns seldom prioritize learning capacity, let alone institutionalize and mainstream Research & Development into the apparatus of governance like the private sector where there is greater insistence on bottom-line accountability to shareholders? Why do citizens allow successive administrations to sweep away or set aside hard-won investments in the heat of political passion, particularly given the forgone alternative for such public expenditure? To what extent does such waste contribute to the enabling environment for corruption? What would it take to orient the society to buy into a set of core principles and normative values to foster good governance consistent with the raison d'état for the state and how can the state be trained to foster the discipline to systematically align with these parameters? How can popular sovereignty enliven the pursuits of state sovereigns in a way that makes leaders valorize long-term strategies to trump incentives determined by narrow self-interest or episodic political calendars?

Recurrent talks about reforming governments to run more efficiently underscore the abiding need for closer attention to the conditions for sustainability, illuminating the expedience of an ethos of learning for optimizing the investments of finite resources and for helping bureaucracies cultivating greater capacity for accountability. Common practices deferring to the conventional wisdom that a failure to plan is a plan to fail tend to prioritize forward-looking strategies to the exclusion of retrospection as captured by the popular understanding that is 20/20. Perhaps, institutionalizing measures to advance the appeal and purchase of an R&D-like mindset for the apparatus of state could help stem the incidence of politicizing and coopting as political capital hard-won measures that task finite resources for public good. Perhaps, it is worth outsourcing vigil to institutions and processes that are relatively autonomous and outlast transient political tenures.

My heightening interest in active learning approaches fueled my attraction to this proposed research. The underlying premise for the intervention is that we can learn our way out of some of the daunting challenges constraining the global governance agenda by organically building on incremental and fundamental gains, rather than succumbing to the proliferation of bureaucracy that risk entrenching inertia for governmental stakeholders tasked with implementing programs. In lieu of privileging mechanically engineered socio-legal solutions, my perspective foregrounds a learning objective attuned to feedback about pertinent gaps between objectives, processes and outcomes. This is with a view to enrich understandings about how to measure how the system is disposed to act and capture evolutionary potentials of the relevant ecology to modulate conditions, manage constraints and stimulate enabling environment to strengthen capacity for learning.