

Chapter 5

Institutional Resilience and Potential Risk During the COVID–19 Pandemic: A Comparative Study

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ABSTRACT

This chapter aims to investigate governmental responses and policies to combat the various risks imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic across three countries: Egypt, Ireland, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Adopting the new public governance (NPG) approach, the study utilizes four indicators to assess the institutional resilience of the three sectors of health, education, and labor force. The chapter contains three sections. Section 1 is devoted to the NPG indicators. Section 2 describes the profile of the three countries and their COVID-19 data. Section 3 shows the response of the three institutions. The study showed that there is a disparity among the three countries in achieving the principles of NPG. Many lessons with regard to institutional resilience and potential risk during crisis can be drawn from the experience of the three countries.

INTRODUCTION

Countries around the world were caught unprepared by the COVID-19 pandemic. All types of societal institutions found themselves operating in unusual and unexpected environments. The pandemic rep-

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-8973-1.ch005

resented a trigger for transforming the performance of these institutions to meet the emerging needs of their employees and clients. This chapter aims at examining the resilience of three institutions (health, education and the labor market) in three different countries: Egypt, Ireland, and the United Arab Emirates, during the COVID-19 pandemic. The main question is to what extent these institutions were able to meet the challenges posed to them by the pandemic?

Institutional resilience is defined as the ability of the institutions to adapt in adverse conditions, or the process whereby institutions recover after having undergone a significant disruption. The health institution has been to the forefront in facing the impacts of Covid-19 as the virus spread to cover all corners of the globe. The resilience of the health institution can be assessed by its ability to respond to the crisis by securing enough stocks of vaccines, oxygen and other medicines, possessing necessary medical equipment, establishing field hospitals, and securing the wellbeing of physicians, nurses and other staff. The resilience of the educational institution can be evaluated by its response to the crisis in adapting to distance learning, addressing community concerns, and securing the wellbeing of students, teachers and other staff. The resilience of the labor market can be measured by the way business closures were handled, in particular the supports offered to financially fragile small businesses. The mass layoff represented a real challenge, hence came the stimulus packages and the problem of how to designate people eligible for pandemic unemployment compensation. Countries followed different economic relief plans to deal with the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the chapter draws on two bodies of theory to shed light on different dimensions of institutional resilience: New Public Governance (NPG) and Ulrich Beck's 'risk society' thesis.

Institutional Resilience and New Public Governance (NPG)

This chapter draws on the ideas of New Public Governance (NPG) to shed light on different dimensions of institutional resilience. Institutional Resilience is defined as "the capacity of the institution to maintain its core purpose and integrity in the face of changed circumstances" (Zolliand & Healy, 2012: 7; Langeland & Others, 2016: 5). It is the characteristic that captures the ability of institutions to anticipate, adapt and recover from crisis by making some modifications in the original composition, mechanisms or functional relationships between institutions of the same nature, or with other sectors (Ensor & Others, 2019). With the inevitability of sudden crisis events like the outbreak of Covid-19, developing institutional resilience is the most appropriate way for adapting to or preparing for such transformative moments.

Accordingly, institutional resilience becomes an essential mechanism in the implementation of New Public Governance (NPG). This new governance, which embodies the expansion of traditional governance work, is applied to processes characterized by nonlinear dynamics (Duit and Galaz, 2008) and local institutional dynamics (Berkes and Ross 2013). As the literature on resilience thinking has made very important contributions to our understanding of resource dynamics and institutional challenges, these resilience indicators include ensuring multiple forms of diversity, securing effective governance and institutions, and dealing with uncertainty and change (Sjöstedt, 2015).

The characteristics of NPG encompass the following four principles of institutional resilience: *diversity* as the elements within the system vary in interactive ways; *aggregation* as the institutional hierarchical organization can be formulated through the self-organization of locally interacting elements/ parts; *flows*

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