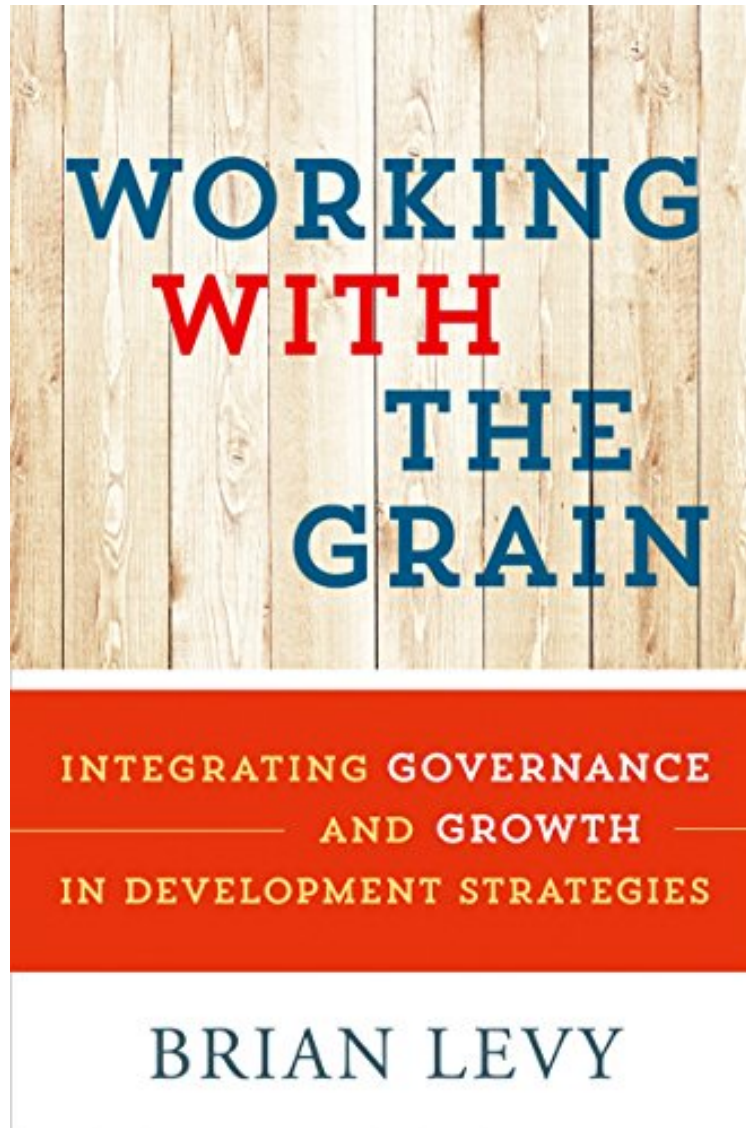


Working with the Grain: Integrating Governance and Growth in Development Strategies

Brian Levy

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Brian Levy : Working with the Grain: Integrating Governance and Growth in Development Strategies before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Working with the Grain: Integrating Governance and Growth in Development Strategies:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Excellent readBy Mahmood AyubThis book is the result of the author's vast practical experience as a development economist and his keen strategic mind. Levy lays bare the approach of international development institutions and some policymakers that all that is needed for countries to

succeed is political will to implement reforms using the "best practice" model available. He demonstrates that in the real life of developing countries there are no best practice solutions, and that the best policymakers can aim for is using indigenous institutions and "working with the grain" to aim for development success. He provides a conceptual architecture for a "good fit" approach to development that lies between "one-size fits all" and the constricting approach of "every country is unique. The book will undoubtedly be of interest to policymakers, development practitioners and civil society organizations. It will also be of interest to academics struggling with the intricacies of institutional issues in development. The book is empirically rigorous but very readable, which also makes it an excellent read for the average non-technical reader.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great TextBy TeewexThis text actually help improve my understanding in working with government and how economic growth and sustainable development interplay under different leadership considering various Typology.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Practical Policy Lessons from the Development SafariBy george guessMost of the development literature of the last four decades started from descriptions of ideal end states, usually Western models. It largely ignored how to get there and the frustrating practical journey in the field working with locals that may take time and result in "good-fit" rather than "best-fit" policies. The literature also ignored how to get the development process going and to sustain it in different country contexts. Describing well-governed states, for example, to officials in the largely failed states of Pakistan or Honduras does not, as Brian Levy says, "conjure them into existence out of thin air". Along comes this important exception to theory-driven development literature---a terse, sober, practical, and positive book filled with personal anecdotes from the field on how to improve overseas development policies. Intended for policymakers, donors, civil servants and development practitioners, it is intended as an alternative to the "best practices" approach to governance and development policy reform that now seems to dominate the development discourse. Dr. Brian Levy, for many years a World Bank economist holds a joint professorship at the University of Cape Town (South Africa) and Johns Hopkins University (SAIS) in Washington. His perspective is medium-term and field based. What can be achieved in a particular country in a decade or less? How can we work with existing interdependencies and networks ("the grain") to generate workable options that sustain forward development momentum? Rather than a standard focus on optimal policies or best practices, he seeks workable options and good fit (not necessarily the best fit) solutions to deal with difficult problem contexts by building on existing country practices. His approach is incremental rather whole systems reform---developing micro level initiatives that can serve as "islands of effectiveness" within a "broader sea of dysfunction, securing some gains in the short term" that serve as "platforms for cumulative gains over the longer-run in both governance and poverty reduction". Through incremental policy or program actions based on in-depth, country specific knowledge, his approach seeks to create what Albert Hirschman called "virtuous circles" or linkages between governance and growth that expand, including more people and local institutions, and move the country towards development. To serve as an analytic "platform" or tool, Levy develops a comparative typology (based inductively on decades of field experience) that distinguishes countries along two dimensions of governance. This allows exploration of country trajectories in order to fashion more detailed policy responses to country development contexts. The typology groups country evolution from low to high incomes and weaker to stronger governance institutions. The aim is to find policy entry points for change that can evoke adaptations in other parts in an ongoing cumulative process. The two dimensions of governance are: whether polities are competitive or dominant, and within them whether rules of the game are characterized by personalized deal-making or impersonal application of rule of law. The platform allows the user to explore development options from a dynamic perspective (as opposed to a static description of, for instance, good governance elements) and find how each of the dominant or competitive perspectives might suggest policy responses that lead to an evolution from personalized to impersonal rules of the game. The aim is to create forward momentum so that gains in one sector, e.g. middle class growth, might strengthen civil society and the private sector. Application of the typology allows useful insights, such as that creation of sustainable democracies require more than just competitive elections. In this context, they require complementary, impersonal check and balance institutions that constrain unchecked, personalized (and often abusive) exercises of power. With this orienting framework, the book then explores detailed "with the grain" development strategies that might work in specific country settings. South Korea and Ethiopia are used as examples of top-down elite dominance that achieved poverty-reduction and growth. The challenge was to unlock private investment without inviting excessive elite predation and capture that would derail the path toward progress. By contrast, Bangladesh and Zambia illustrate how growth strategies can be fashioned within the context of dysfunctional (and corrupt) governance. An important lesson is that personalized competition in the latter two cases provided a workable platform for economic development. Incremental reforms on the heels of development advice in these countries did just enough to keep the virtuous circles moving along the path to progress. The book then moves on to illustrate how governance and growth interact in order to deal with the principal constraint to development in many countries---government itself. Public sector reform efforts are divided into: hierarchical (or strengthening the system-wide bureaucracy or programmatic coverage) and horizontal approaches (or strengthening accountability mechanisms such as checks and balances such as electoral systems and the judiciary). Since most countries offer limited opportunities for great leaps

forward to good governance, the book explores options for easing governmental constraints that impede forward development momentum. Examples of incremental and multi-stakeholder approaches for basic education in Zambia and community-driven development in South Africa are examined as efforts that can create "islands of effectiveness" in otherwise bleak policy settings. This is a solid book which should be read all development practitioners.

The development discourse has long been dominated by best practices prescriptions for reform, but these are not a useful way of responding to the governance ambiguities of the early 21st century. *Working with the Grain* draws on both innovative scholarship and Brian Levy's quarter century of experience at the World Bank to lay out an alternative—a practical, analytically grounded, "with-the-grain" approach to reducing poverty and addressing weaknesses in governance. Best practice prescriptions confuse the goals of development with the journey of getting from here to there. A strong rule of law, capable and accountable governments, and a flexible, level playing field business environment are indeed desirable end points. But the ability to describe well-governed states does not conjure them into existence. If the only available actions are all or nothing, then efforts at change will almost certainly fall short, leading to disillusion and despair. By contrast, this book takes as its point of departure the realities of a country's economy, polity and society, and directs attention towards the challenges of initiating and sustaining forward development momentum. The book:— distinguishes among four broad groups of countries, according to whether polities are dominant or competitive, and whether institutions are personalized or impersonal— identifies alternative options for governance and policy reform—top down options which endeavor to strengthen formal institutions, and options supporting the emergence of "islands of effectiveness"— explores how to identify entry points for change where there is a good fit between divergent country contexts and alternative options for reform. Sometimes the binding constraint to forward movement can be institutional, making governance reform the priority; at other times, the priority can better be on inclusive growth. Taking the decade-or-so time horizon of practitioners, the aim is to nudge things along—seeking gains that initially may seem quite modest but sometimes can give rise to a cascading sequence of change for the better.

"This is an important and original contribution to growth and development that suggests how to integrate complex parts of the development process. It is a major contribution." Douglass North, Nobel Laureate in Economic Science, Washington University in St. Louis "If you want to understand how politics, institutions, and policy interact with each other to produce economic success or failure - not over the very long run when we are all dead, but in the shorter run that affects us all - there are few books that pack as much insight as this one. Brian Levy is a practitioner who can theorize as well as any scholar. But the real value added of this book is the practical and pragmatic approach it brings to institutional reform." Dani Rodrik, Albert Hirschman Professor of Social Science, Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton "Brian Levy draws on a wealth of experience as a practitioner to provide us with a practical agenda for helping improve the governance of poor countries. His book will be required reading for everyone concerned with the institutional foundations of development." Francis Fukuyama, Olivier Nomellini Senior Fellow, Center on Democracy, Development, and the Rule of Law, Stanford University "I finally got to reading Brian Levy's *Working With the Grain*. It is easily the most underestimated development book of 2014, and should be read alongside William Easterly's *Tyranny of Experts* (which it both complements and pushes back against)." Ken Opalo, PhD Candidate, Stanford University "Working with the Grain is about getting from the here to there of better governance in developing countries. Building on insights from recent scholarship and practice, this important book eschews recipes in a serious and thought-provoking analysis of how to approach reform initiatives in distinct contexts." Merilee S. Grindle, Professor of International Development, Kennedy School of Government, and Director, David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, Harvard University "Levy's prose is more dynamic, his writing more engaging, his anecdotes more vivid, his lessons more systematic, and his text seems to have undergone more rigorous editing. [The book does] a great service in providing an accurate diagnosis of the ills afflicting development studies." -- Jan Erk, European Political Science About the Author Brian Levy has a sustained track record of both thought leadership and hands-on experience. At the World Bank (where he worked for over two decades), he led the program to scale up support for public sector reform in Africa, and subsequently co-led the effort to mainstream governance and anti-corruption into the organization's operational programs. He has published widely on the interactions between institutions, political economy and development policy. He received his Ph.D in economics from Harvard University in 1983. He currently is on the faculties of the School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, and the University of Cape Town.