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OF "ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM"
AS A SOLUTION TO THE
PROBLEM OF INADEQUATE
ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY
IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES.**

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Introduction:

The importance of administration hardly needs emphasis. In the modern era, it is expected to be the prime mover of social and economic development. An effective bureaucracy and a zealous modernizing elite are essential pre-requisites for national integration, economic progress and political development.

In developing countries, even though government machineries may well be by far the most effectively organized and best equipped institutions, the view is common that governments are faced with serious administrative inadequacies for the planning and execution of development programmes at national and regional levels. The inadequacies become the more significant when we remember that a large number of these societies are striving hard to achieve complex social goals and working under great pressure for their early realization.

The purpose of this paper are two fields. In the first place, it is intended to explore the major reasons for the emergence of administrative reform in developing countries and its meaning. Secondly, and more importantly, an attempt will be made to assess the usefulness of administrative reform as a solution to the problem of inadequate administrative capacity in developing countries. In doing so, we shall look, first of all, at the main features that are considered to be "typical" of administration in developing countries.

I -The Main Features of Administration in Developing Countries.

The main features of administration in developing countries are best put by Ferrel HEADY, a respected pioneer on public administration. He considers the

following main features as "typical" of administration in developing countries - at least in the sense of their overall prevalence or recurrence.

Firstly, the basic patterns of public administration, instead of being indigenous, are based on the concepts of western bureaucratic administration. Those countries under colonial rule usually adopted the system of administration existing in the parent country and continued to retain this even after independence. This system of administration was suited to the requirements of colonial rule rather than of a post-independence government bent on changing the socio-economic structure of the country. This system of administration which has originated from legal principles, government organization and business administration in the west, cannot be readily transplanted as it is to cope with the complexities of development and underlying problems of developing countries. Generally, the inherited administrative machine can "tell us how to plan, how to organize, what to manage and why. Much of its content deals more with "processes", rather than with "substances""(1). The bureaucracy was elitist, autocratic, order-oriented, aloof and paternalistic; these traits were, if to greater or lesser extent, preserved by the successor bureaucracies in the new states after independence.

Thus, the general adoption of the western system of administration in developing countries handicaps the achievement of social and economic development. And here, it is basic and important that a new orientation, a new concept of administration is needed to deal with the crucial social and economic problems these countries face. In short, significant administrative reform is needed as a solution to these problems.

Secondly, the bureaucracies suffer from the shortage of administrators having adequate managerial capability, developmental skills and technical competences. This shortage has been aggravated in some countries by the departure, occasionally en masse, of many of the expropriate administrators, thereby disrupting the government machinery while its tasks rapidly exalted.

Thirdly, there is a tendency in new states to pursue other goals than the achievement of developmental objectives. Such tendencies are observed in the pursuit of deepseated values of a traditional nature which have not been modified or abandoned despite the adoption of non-traditional social structure. The value attached to status based on ascription rather than achievement explains much of this behaviour. Studies of the Thai bureaucracy emphasize that status and status relationships are the prime motivating factors in the system rather than the desire to achieve developmental goals.

These latter considerations may also deeply affect personnel management, including recruitment. Recruitment in developing countries is sometimes based on appointment dominated by familistic considerations. Candidates for office are

recruited and appointed not because of their technical competence, but because of the pressure to appoint relatives and friends (the persistence of familistic influences). Fred W. RIGGS refers, for example, to "bureaucratic recruitment" where the particularistic choice of the official dominates. He observes: "Using the pretext of eligibility based on examination, he chooses from the certified those whose personal loyalty he trusts. The same criterion enables him to choose from his family and friends those in whom he has confidence. He helps them gain schooling, certificates and examination ratings which make them eligible"(2). Similar non-merit considerations may greatly influence promotions, assignments, dismissals, and other personnel actions within the service(3).

There is also the tendency of new regimes to be more deeply interested in political stability and survival rather than economic development in such as well as the conduct of business with the general public.

The prevalence of widespread corruption in almost all tiers of the public services is yet another ill afflicting these societies. Yet another common feature is the use of the public service to solve the unemployment problem. This appears to be one of the reasons for keeping a large number of employees in the lower ranks of the public service as attendants, messengers, minor clerks and other supernumeraries.

There is also a widespread discrepancy between form and reality which has been labelled as "formalism" by Fred W. RIGGS who noted: "The gap between expectations and actualities can be partially masked by enacting laws that can not be enforced, adopting personnel regulations that are quietly by-passed, announcing a programme for delegation of administrative discretion while keeping tight control of decision-making at the center, or reporting as actually met, production targets which in fact remain only partially fulfilled. These tendencies are not absent in such developed countries as France and the United States. However, the risk of making judgement about substance from what the formal record shows hazardous enough in trying to understand any administrative system - is much greater in most transitional situations"(4).

These inadequacies call for wide-ranging administrative reforms in order to make the bureaucracy effective, honest, efficient and responsible. The fact of independence alone makes administrative reforms inevitable or rather imperative. As the new state can not for long rely on the foreign administrators and their methods of administration, it has to build up its own indigenous administration borrowing what it can from the departing rulers and improving the rest.

The inherited administrative machinery in the developing countries has not gone far than to maintain the existing system and the problems of "system maintenance" determined its concepts, methodologies and its contents and tools. And here, I think, lies one of the basic arguments to support a special

conception, a special understanding and a special kind of administration which could cope with the massive developmental problems of developing countries. The "system maintenance" conception is irrelevant and completely inappropriate to the approach of the administrative and developmental problems of the developing countries. The feeling that something more is needed is becoming more widely recognized given the crucial problems of social and economic development.

The rapid spread of urbanization and secularization and the demands for increased public participation and decentralization have put excessive burdens onto the government machinery and have made change, and especially greater adaptability, essential, although the problems involved are enormous. The urge to modernize requires broadscale and fundamental changes which create new demands and tensions between old values and new values, between the traditional and the modern. These tensions are reflected not only within the government bureaucracy but also in its relationship with the society.

II - The Reasons of the Emergence of Administrative Reform.

Administrative reforms started becoming a subject of serious study during the 1950s when systematic efforts were being made to provide technical assistance to the developing countries to strengthen their administrative capabilities for development. The prominence of administrative reform on the international scene was largely the result of pressure from poor countries and the aid agencies themselves, and also the influence of the Comparative Administrative Group (C.A.G.) of the American Society for Public Administration (which was composed of scholars involved in international technical assistance efforts to improve administrative capacities).

The main reason for the emergence of the C.A.G. in fact was the apparent limitations of the western model of public administration when applied to the problems of Asia, Africa and Latin America. The larger context and complexities of development in the newly independent states have revealed serious underlying problems that could be studied and remedied not only through the application of law and political science, upon which orthodox public administration had traditionally dwelt, but also through the joint application of economics, psychology, sociology and other social sciences(5).

During the 1960s, members of the C.A.G. were responsible for a large number of publications concerned with the administrative problems of poor countries; these put particular stress on administrative reform needs and experience. This literature prompted scholars and practitioners around the world to address similar questions in their own areas - with the support in turn of the

United Nations' Public Administration Division, which encouraged interaction at a series of seminars and conferences(6).

Then, institutional supports and developments had resulted by the middle 1960s in a new subject for interdisciplinary research: development administration which refers to the administration of development programmes, that is to the methods used by the large-scale organizations, notably governments, to implement policies and plans designed to meet their developmental objectives. Anyone wanting to change society has to depend on the administrative capability to do so, a function of administrative innovation and reform(7).

Development administration involves the strengthening of administrative capability. Clearly, if development programmes are successfully carried out, they will induce changes in a polity's environment which may well, in turn, enhance its administrative capabilities. The improvement of education, for example, should increase the ability of a population to support good government and also intensify its demands for better public services. Consequently, the improvement of administrative capabilities is an important means for achieving developmental goals in any economic sector.

III - Concept and characteristics of Administrative Reform.

So far we have explained why the concept of administrative reform has emerged, what we need to know now is exactly what is meant by this concept.

It is obvious that there is no shortage of definitions in the literature on public administration and administrative reform. In this part, we shall tackle a various sample of the definitions offered by writers on the subject.

Administrative reform has been defined by Gerald E. CAIDEN, a respected pioneer on the subject as "the artificial inducement of administrative transformation against resistance"(8). He makes a distinction between administrative reform and administrative change by saying that the administrative change is a self-adjusting organizational response to changing conditions while the need for administrative reform arises because of malfunctioning of the natural processes of administrative change. Yehezkel DROR sees it as "directed change of the main features of an administrative system"(9). Goal orientation and the comprehensiveness of change are the two main attributes of reform in this sense.

Some writers suggest different meanings of the term for different countries depending upon their political and economic systems. Thus, for Britain and other liberal democracies, administrative reform is described as "the process of making

changes in administrative structures or procedures within the public services, because they have become out of line with the expectations or values of the social and political environment"(10). For many of third world countries and also the USSR - the term "is more frequently applied to attempts to modernize or change society by using the administrative system as an instrument for social and economic transformation. Such differences in the meaning of a term are not uncommon in the social sciences but do not make for easy international co-operation or comparative analysis"(11).

Recent discussions on the subject view administrative reform as a sub-system of a wider social system which includes a political sub-system. The interactions between and among the administrative and political subsystems are crucial and to a large extent determine the establishing of objectives and strategies as well as probabilities of the success of the implementation of administrative reform proposals.

Administrative reform programmes may be instrumental in achieving developmental goals in the following ways:

Firstly, reform proposals challenge bureaucratic inertia and conservative administrators; and although bureaucratic defence mechanism may well temporarily suppress change, things can never quite be the same and peace tokens have to be made if the situation is to be kept in hand.

Second, reform programmes may attract enterprising administrative talent and provide valuable experience for a new generation of administrative aspirants.

Third, reformers promote badly needed administrative modernization, and this is likely, in turn, to set off a chain reaction by many of specific functional reforms as changes in techniques, skills and attitudes in specialized fields seem more attainable than possibly the harder changes to carry through in administration.

Fourth, innovative "progressive" forces within a bureaucracy find openings for their creative talents in empirical problem solving, particularly the kind presented by administrative reform programmes.

Any effort to transform administrative systems is to be commended in the face of official indifference, technical ignorance, political intransigence and public apathy(12).

Many of the newly independent countries of the third world have made attempts to improve their administrative systems and procedures. Some regimes, of course, have not felt like tempering with their administration either because the performance of the administrative machinery was to their satisfaction or because their leaders did not perceive any imperative to change the system, given the competing priorities which demanded their attention. Some countries

have, by contrast, adopted the practical approach of improvising changes to their systems as and when the necessity has arisen.

A third category of countries, on the other hand, have purposely planned reforms and established formal machinery - for example committees of enquiry, civil service commissions, or even a ministry of "administrative reforms" - for the initiation and evaluation of reforms. They have also sought expert advice from consultants and investigative teams from abroad for the improvement of their administrative machinery.

Finally, there have been some exceptional countries like the Congo where the reforms were imposed from outside because the entire administrative edifice had collapsed due to the rapid departure of the colonial power and the non-existence of adequate local administrative manpower to keep the country running without external assistance.

IV Administrative Reform Programmes: Implementation and evaluation.

The overall results of such administrative reform programmes discussed above have not, however, been encouraging, though there have been some countries which have achieved a measure of success. One example of such success was the 1968 administrative reform in Iran(13). There are, however, many situations which are not always recognized administrative reform but in which considerable success has been achieved. There have been more in which reform efforts have failed in spite of institution supports. G.E. CAIDEN, for example, argues: "Unfortunately, their very lack of administrative capacities handicapped them in carrying through administrative reform. Wholesale transformation of administrative systems were thwarted by political instability, economic scarcity, social conflict, cultural confusion and administrative incompetence. Often, new leaders promised to tidy up the mess left by their predecessors, and for a time they managed to improve matters, but things gradually sank back where they once were. They have formally institutionalized reform in various reform bodies, supervisory agencies, special ministries, prestigious institutes of education and training, expert advisory bodies, model laws. and all manners of exemplary projects but these made little progress"(14).

Firstly, administrative reform has been undertaken as a result of change in the political system or in some cases with a change of regime. Ralph BRAIBANTI mentions that the adjustment has been made by the administrative system to the political system. In Brazil, in the U.A.R., Ghana and Tanzania, many administrative changes were brought about in the bureaucratic machinery as a result of direct action(15).

A second group of reforms occurred as a result of changes in government institutions. A striking example could be that of the merger of Indian States in the federation between 1948 and 1957 with the subsequent integration of administrative institutions. Similar cases are noticeable at lower levels. Although local government reforms have not succeeded in achieving all their objectives, some have had profound impact on the working of the administrative machinery at that level(16).

The analysis of the causes of failure of administrative reforms in the majority of developing countries suggest that the methods and approaches followed in the pursuit of administrative reforms have tended to be too narrow and one-sided. Emphasis has been laid on changes in structure, administrative methods and techniques, for example, while the behavioural aspects of organization and administration have been ignored, thus rendering the changes purely formal and as having little impact on the actual working of the administrative organization.

Since the introduction of new institutions and reforms based on indigenous institution building is a difficult process the transplantation of foreign administrative institutions, whether direct or indirect, has been most frequently resorted to in the developing countries, thus highlighting the limitations of development administration in providing alternative institutions on the basis of ecological factors.

According to V.V. MOHARIR, "institutions and changes introduced through local initiative have proved more successful than those resulting from recommendations by foreign consultants and financed through foreign technical assistance funds. Impressed by the adverse correlation of the extent of technical assistance and the effectiveness of administrative reform programmes in India, Ralph BRAIBANTI ventured a general hypothesis: the greater the range of alternatives for foreign help, the more complicated the process of ordering change in the receiving nation and the greater the need for intellectualizing that process"(17).

This view about transplantation of foreign institutions has been developed further by some other pioneers of administrative reform. According to G.E. CAIDEN, for example, administrative reform is a dependent variable and can not be separated from its environment or from other systems within which it operates and with which it interacts. Similar is the view of BIRKHEAD, who holds that administrative reforms are successful only when they are combined with social, political and economic reforms. And according to F.W. RIGGS, administrative reform in developing nations is based on connections and interactions between administrative change and corresponding processes of economic, political, social and cultural development. Administrative reform can be effective and successful only when these processes are taken into consideration.

Other important factors inhibiting the success of administrative reforms are the high tolerance of maladministration, lack of political will and inconsistency and non-continuity of effort. The governmental leaders in developing countries are mostly concerned with development programmes or preserving and strengthening their political power. They will undertake reforms if these are likely to further their objectives. In the administrative reform, John, D. MONTGOMERY, using the concept of annoyance states that the government will change the administrative machinery if the working of bureaucracy becomes so annoying as to be intolerable. This means that the government in developing countries applies to administrative reform whose institutions will protect his interests(18). Fred W. RIGGS refers to this as a preference among elites for personal expediency as against "public-principled" interests. Yehezkel DROR, introducing the concept of risk, maintains that political leaders who have newly achieved power and who consider bureaucracy as inimical to their programmes may counteract these risks by changing top personnel, infusing loyal elements into the higher bureaucratic strata, strengthening the role of the party and its position with regard to the bureaucracy and by reforming the administrative machinery(19).

Since the "costs" of reforms may be considerable, the politicians are reluctant to undertake them. Among the problems is the risk of antagonizing the bureaucracy which may be red in situations where the bureaucracy is a major power or, alternatively where the government is weak and its political foundation insecure.

The bureaucracy forms one major group which may itself initiate reform. Bureaucracy may also resist reforms. A most relevant classifying variable is that aspect of bureaucracy which reflects its degree of contact and transactions with the larger society and which would give some indication of its relative responsiveness. H.B LEE divides bureaucratic systems into three categories: a) closed; b) mixed; c) open(20).

In the closed bureaucracy pattern, as H.B. LEE explains, the bureaucracy is a distinctly elitist and privileged class, entered early by means of Civil Service examinations which are related to long-established university courses. Once within the Civil Service, bureaucrats are guaranteed long service without traffic or intercourse with the rest of society (examples: India and Pakistan).

Concerning the mixed bureaucracy pattern, H.B. LEE explains that it is the result of some contacts, limited though they may, between the bureaucracy and the rest of society. A major change in the bureaucratic structure occurs when the bureaucracy is affected by a major social and political upheaval such as a war, revolution or a coup d'état. The experience of Korea, Thailand, and Turkey during the last decade present good examples of mixed bureaucracies.

The open bureaucracy model is explained by H.B. LEE as one which has a relatively flexible recruitment pattern, or hardly any fixed pattern at all. Everyone is eligible; entrance standards in terms of education and experience are not very strict, lateral entries are relatively unimpeded. Multiple contacts and exchanges take place between government and industry. The political parties, are powerful and their influence on the bureaucracy more direct (examples would include Indonesia under Sukarno and the Philippines before Magsaysay).

H.B. LEE concludes that bureaucracies in developing countries are usually a combination of mixed and closed and, thus, give little support to administrative reform programmes. Powerful bureaucracies resist the reforms in order to protect their vested interests. A classical example is that of the C.S.P(*) class of the Pakistan bureaucracy, which successfully blocked the publication, let alone the implementation of the report of the Services commission headed by the chief justice of the Supreme Court of Pakistan for seven years because the report recommended the abolition of the hegemony of this class.

Bureaucracies generally in the third world, in order to maintain the air of professionalism, do give at least limited support to the administrative reform. But they sponsor administrative reform activities in such a circumscribed way that these pose little threat to their power and status. Ralph BRAIBANTI, for example, notes that most of the reform programmes considered in Sri Lanka and Malaysia have been directed towards questions of salary and service structure, issues unlikely to change the basic character of the bureaucracy.

Lack of clarity about the objectives of administrative reform could also be frustrating. There is a consensus among the practitioners and academicians that the desired objectives of administrative reforms must be set clearly in the discussion of reform as early as possible. This is essential in the first instance for the determination of reform strategies as these are closely dependent on goals. Moreover, without specification of goals, it will not be possible to determine the extent of success or failure of the reforms. Emphasizing the significance of proper reform strategies, a UN report observed: "the frequency with which administrative efforts had failed in the past demonstrated the difficulty of making them effective without good reform strategies to carry them out"(21).

Most reforms fail at the implementation stage. The experience of India and Pakistan can be cited in this regard. Commenting on the administrative reform introduced in the regime of the late Prime Minister of Pakistan Z.A. BHUTTO, the civil services commission observed in a report: "the commission is of the view the concepts of equalisation of opportunities, introduction of unified

(*) - C.S.P. = Civil Service of Pakistan.

grading structure, professionalization of services and literal entry of high calibre professionals and specialists were sound and landable, but it was the way these concepts were put into practice (e.g. letting political expediency dominate objective consideration) that vitiated the whole process and frustured the achievement of desired results"(22).

In response to the failure of reform efforts, two things have happened. On the one hand, deliberate attempts have been made to identify and analyze those factors and situations which prevent the implementation of reforms. On the other hand, strategies have been developed to facilitate the process of implementation.

Gerald E. CAIDEN provides a long list of factors and situations which must not only be understood but avoided, as these result in the failure of major administrative reforms. According to him: "A bad beginning; imitation not innovation; incorrect diagnosis; hidden intentions; indecisive approach; faulty planning; unduly respective techniques and instrumentalities; inability to command resources; absences of feedback; no motoring; evaluation ignored and goal displacement"(23).

H.B. LEE considers the degree of implementation as a funtion of the social environment, the political structure, the reform agents, the reform agency and the reform strategy. He notes two reform strategies: a) comprehensive; b) selective. He added that a comprehensive strategy can be implemented if the leadership by the reform agents and the internal structure of reform agency are strong and if the social environment and political structures are favourable.

Irrespective of the various transcending bureaucratic structures of the developing countries, the administrator's role would be that of change agent, H.B. LEE explains. The task of the administration in a developing society is different to that in a traditional or modern society: in a traditional society, the administrator may well be a royal servant or a colonial agent; in a modern state, perhaps the regulator of interests or the defender of public interests; in a developing society, he must be a change agent(24). A selective strategy can be implemented if either the leadership is strong but the situation is unfavourable or the situation is favourable but the leadership is weak. It follows that if the leadership is weak and, at the same time, the situation is unfavourable no strategy can be expected to be effective.

H.B. LEE, on the basis of experiences of many countries, argues that pragmatic reformers have better probabilities of success as these admirably suit the needs of closed bureaucracies which can be found in most of the developing countries. To enhance the possibility of implementation, reformers must have a clear understanding of the nature, type and objectives of reform as well as the stage of bureaucratic development their countries have reached.

Ralph BRAIBANTI, having his conclusions on the administrative reform experience in India, points out that the creation of an appropriate environment for facilitating the process of reform implementation, presupposes the creation of sustenance and spread of appropriate attitudes among the officials who matter most those who occupy key positions in the administrative hierarchy from which the consequences of good or bad leadership emerge and permeate the entire structure. He considers four requirements as essential for the successful implementation; these are:

- 1) Implementation must become involved in the process as easily as practicable;
- 2) An adequate agency for follow-up action must be established;
- 3) The urge to improve must come from within if there are to be lasting improvements;
- 4) Extreme care must be taken in the choice and training of personnel meant to undertake the implementation of reforms.

G.E. CAIDEN makes the following assumptions regarding the implementation of successful reforms:

First, that the government has recognized the need to do something effective;

Second, that the government has appointed acknowledged experts to identify the weakest points and to concentrate on those remedies likely to have the widest application;

Third, that the experts within government have to conduct full enquiries and publicize their efforts whether in temporary commission or lasting institutional arrangements;

Fourth, that the experts are capable of doing a competent job(5).

In actual world, things do not exactly follow the idealistic routine. Many governments only pay lip-service to reform and have no real desire to see major reforms take places rather than would simply like to talk about it because of the political gains involved. Serious efforts are seldom made to maintain a balance between politicians, bureaucrats, academicians and outside experts when members of reform commissions are chosen. This uneven composition results in recommendations which are impracticable and difficult to implement. Bureaucratic attitudes have not changed, which prompts perpetuation of a negative and hostile disposition towards change. Changes are always feared and frowned upon.

Conclusion:

In concluding this analysis, it may be said that in any country, and especially in the developing countries, the gap between the public policy-making and implementation, between the ideal and the real can be bridged considerably if the government gives serious attention to five types of action(26).

First, a well-defined and hold policy, a firm decision on the part of political leadership in power to carry out the reforms accepted by it.

Second, there is the need for adequate institutional arrangements and safeguards for implementation of reforms.

Third, an operational plan to push ahead with the implementation of the accepted reforms.

Fourth, time and resources are made available to the implementation of administrative reforms programmes at the appropriate stages so that no damaging bottlenecks occur.

Fifth, whenever the government has become aware of the problem of administrative reform implementation, it has to:

- a) to recognize the need to do something effective;
- b) to appoint knowledgeable experts to identify the weakest points and to concentrate on those remedies likely to have the widest application;
- c) that the experts within government have to conduct full enquiries and publicize their efforts whether in temporary commission or lasting institutional arrangements;
- d)that the experts are capable of doing a competent job.

Finally, it may be emphasized that fundamental change of the administrative system is a time consuming process which requires patience and continuity of effort. The government must show continuous interest and consistency in its long term views. Lack of much continuity as a result of political instability is a principal cause of failure in developing countries. Continuity and consistency do not mean inflexibility in reform planning and implementation. Although long term planning is essential, plans should be flexible. Moreover, continuous re-evaluation is also necessary during the implementation process (feed-backs).

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