

# Administrative Reform: A Conceptual Analysis

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*A review of the literature on administrative reform reveals the lack of a consensus among public administration scholars as to how the term should be defined. While varying definitions of this concept abound, most of these definitions fail to identify its goals as well as to consider the institutional and attitudinal aspects of reform. Aside from offering a tentative definition which avoids these shortcomings, this article reviews the literature on this concept with particular emphasis on the goals, approaches and obstacles to administrative reform. It identifies the major goal of administrative reform as the improvement of the level of organization effectiveness of organizations concerned. It reexamines the conditions under which the use of the comprehensive or the incremental approach to administrative reform may be more feasible, and discusses how such factors as history, technology, culture, society and economy can obstruct the implementation of these reforms.*

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## Introduction

This paper addresses itself to the concept of administrative reform for two major reasons. In the first place, the research gap on administrative reform especially in the new states is a very wide one. Very little research has been done in this area. In the words of Gerald E. Caiden, the author of a pioneering book on the subject, "work in administrative reform is patchy in appearance and

variable in quality."<sup>1</sup> Apart from the need to conduct more research on administrative reform to rectify the research gap and the contribution to knowledge that such research would make, research on administrative reform is also conducted for practical reasons. The new states, according to Milton J. Esman, are united in their desire to attain the twin goals of nation-building and socio-economic

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<sup>1</sup> Gerald E. Caiden, *Administrative Reform* (London: The Penguin Press, 1969),

p. 1. Carroll K. Shaw, in a meeting of the Southeast Asia Development Administration Group (SEADAG) at Lexington, Kentucky in February 1967, identified nineteen "researchable questions on development administration of particular interest to the Agency for International Development." Three of the nineteen topics deal specifically with administrative reform. Carroll K. Shaw, "Outline of Researchable Questions on Development Administration of Particular Interest to the Agency for International Development," *Research on Development Administration*, SEADAG Papers on Problems of Development in Southeast Asia, No. 15 (New York: The Asia Society, 1967), pp. 1-2.

development.<sup>2</sup> One of the main findings of the United Nations' *A Handbook of Public Administration* is that "administrative improvement is the *sine qua non* in the implementation of programmes of national development."<sup>3</sup> Administrative reform constitutes one way of improving administration, and is a means toward development administration. Viewed in this context, research on administrative reform provides essential information to political leaders in the new states utilizing such a strategy for development.

In short, then, the concept of administrative reform is important for both theoretical and practical reasons: research on administrative reform contributes to new knowledge in this area as well as provides the necessary data for those leaders in the new states that employ administrative reform as a means for national development.

Given the importance of administrative reform, what do we know about it? What does administrative reform mean? For what reasons are administrative reforms usually undertaken? In what ways are administrative reforms implemented? What are the major obstacles to administrative reform? These are the four

questions that will be answered in the following sections of the paper by reviewing the literature on the concept of administrative reform in terms of its meaning, goals, approaches and obstacles. Such a review of the literature has at least two benefits. First, it provides an inventory of what is known about administrative reform. A second and more important advantage is the identification of research gaps on administrative reform and the consequent development of research designs to rectify such gaps.

Before proceeding further, it should be noted that the four aspects of administrative reform to be dealt with do not receive equal attention. Much more emphasis has been given to the meaning of administrative reform simply because the existing definitions of the concept suffer from several weaknesses. To be more specific, the various definitions of administrative reform available will be critically evaluated with the aim of formulating a definition that avoids the shortcomings of the former. Similarly, the approaches to administrative reform are also discussed in some detail, but not the analysis of the goals and obstacles to reform as these two aspects are less controversial and, as such, do not require detailed examination.

### Meaning

Like most other concepts in the social sciences, the concept of administrative reform means different things to different people, and there is no universally acceptable definition of it. This view is echoed by

<sup>2</sup> Milton J. Esman, "The Politics of Development Administration," in John D. Montgomery and William Siffin (eds.), *Approaches to Development: Politics, Administration and Change* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), p. 60.

<sup>3</sup> Herbert Emmerich, *A Handbook of Public Administration: Current Concepts and Practices with Special Reference to Developing Countries* (New York: U.N. Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 1961), p. 1.

Caiden in the following way:

The study of administrative reform is handicapped by the absence of a universally accepted definition. The indiscriminate use of the term has led to confusion and to difficulties in setting parameters for research and theorizing... The term has been applied, for instance, to all improvements in administration... to general administrative overhauls in difficult circumstances... to specific remedies for maladministration... to any suggestion for better government... and to intentions of self-style administrative reformers...<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, most scholars conducting research on administrative reform do not make any attempt to define the concept explicitly.<sup>5</sup> This feature is especially apparent in the various case studies on administrative reform in several countries.<sup>6</sup> More often than not, these case studies avoid the definitional route and concentrate on the administrative reforms themselves. Some of these case studies,

<sup>4</sup> Caiden, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

<sup>5</sup> For example, Fred W. Riggs, "Administrative Reform as a Problem of Dynamic Balancing," *Philippine Journal of Public Administration*, Vol. XIV, No. 2 (April 1970), pp. 101-135.

<sup>6</sup> Representative examples of these are: Lynton K. Caldwell, "Technical Assistance and Administrative Reform in Colombia," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. XLVII, No. 2 (June 1953), pp. 494-510; Roderick T. Groves, "Administrative Reform and the Politics of Reform: The Case of Venezuela," *Public Administration Review*, Vol. XXVII, No. 5 (December 1967), pp. 436-445; Gilbert B. Siegel and Kleber Nascimento, "Formalism in Brazilian Administrative Reform," *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, Vol. XXXI, No. 3 (1965), pp. 175-184; and Ralph E. Crow and Adnan Iskandar, "Administrative Reform in Lebanon 1958-1959," *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, Vol. XXVII, No. 3 (1961), pp. 293-307.

while not defining administrative reform, refer specifically to attempts at reorganizing the administrative set-up of the country concerned.<sup>7</sup>

Needless to say, it is imperative for any scholar writing on administrative reform to define what he is writing about in order to avoid confusion. It is, therefore, necessary at this juncture to consider several definitions of administrative reform beginning with Caiden's definition. Caiden has defined administrative reform as "the artificial inducement of administrative transformation against resistance."<sup>8</sup> This definition implies that 1) administrative reform is artificially stimulated by man and is not accidental, automatic or natural; 2) administrative reform is a transformatory process; and 3) resistance is a concomitant of the process of administrative reform.<sup>9</sup>

Caiden's definition is unsatisfactory for three reasons. First, and most importantly, his definition does not identify the purpose or goal of administrative reform. As a result of this silence on the objectives of administrative reform, one scholar has argued that Caiden's definition is one-sided and incomplete.<sup>10</sup> Put

<sup>7</sup> See Yoshinori Ide, "Administrative Reform and Innovation: The Japanese Case," *International Social Science Journal*, Vol. XXI, No. 1 (1969), pp. 56-67.

<sup>8</sup> Caiden, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> Bata K. Dey, "Administrative Reform—A Perspective Analysis," *Indian Journal of Public Administration*, Vol. XVII, No. 3 (July-September 1971), p. 560.

<sup>10</sup> Ma. Concepcion T. Parroco, "A Theoretical Framework for the Study of Administrative Reform?" *Philippine Journal of Public Administration*, Vol. XIV, No. 3 (1970), p. 327. This is a review of Caiden's book.

in another way, Caiden's definition does not make any attempt to answer the question: Administrative reform for what?

Secondly, Caiden's definition of administrative reform is inadequate because the phrase "administrative transformation" is vague and does not tell us very much about the content of the administrative reform. Unlike Caiden, however, other scholars have equated administrative reform with administrative reorganization. For example, Frederick C. Mosher has argued that:

Students of public administration as well as the majority of our educated citizenry have long associated and even identified the word *reform* in the administrative realm with *reorganization*. There is ample etymological justification for such an association. *Reform* has literal origins in the giving of new or different form to something; and, in treating organizational matters, new form signifies new organizational structure. *Reform* has a strong normative connotation: as a noun, it signifies "change for the better;" as a verb, "to change from bad to good." *Reorganization*, though somewhat more restricted and precise in its definition, has come to acquire nearly the same meaning in American culture, both in its descriptive and in its normative senses.<sup>11</sup>

Mosher proceeds to say that reorganization has been utilized as a major instrument and "symbol of administrative improvement" by American students of public administra-

tion for several decades.

Even though most attempts at administrative reform take the form of reorganization, it is nevertheless inaccurate to describe all such efforts in terms of reorganization. It is probably more accurate to say that administrative reorganization constitutes *one* important procedure for implementing administrative reforms.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, a Filipino scholar has distinguished between the terms "administrative reform," "reorganization" and "innovation" thus:

The broader term "administrative reform" usually implies a crusading intent; it has a definite moralistic tone. In content, it may actually involve "reorganization" and "innovation."<sup>13</sup>

Another and perhaps more important reason for not equating administrative reform with administrative reorganization is that the latter term is too narrow and refers to only one aspect — the *institutional* aspect — of administrative reform. This aspect of administrative reform refers to the *institutional* or organizational changes accompanying the reform. It does not include attempts to change the attitudes, behaviour, or values of administrators or other individuals involved in the reform process, i.e., the *attitudinal* aspect of administra-

<sup>12</sup> For a catalogue of the different procedures for implementing administrative reforms, see William F. Finan and Alan L. Dean, "Procedures for the Preparation and Implementation of Administrative Reforms," *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, Vol. XXIII (1967), pp. 437-452.

<sup>13</sup> Jose V. Abueva, "Administrative Reform and Culture," in Hahn-Been Lee and Abelardo G. Samonte (eds.), *Administrative Reforms in Asia* (Manila, Philippines: Eastern Regional Organization for Public Administration, 1970), p. 21, FN 1.

tive reform. Needless to say, both the institutional and attitudinal aspects must be considered if any discussion on administrative reform is to be complete.

The third and final reason for not accepting Caiden's definition concerns his assumption that the element of resistance accompanies the process of administrative reform. There are several problems with this assumption. In the first place, nowhere in his book does Caiden justify or provide empirical evidence for this assumption.<sup>14</sup> He simply assumes that resistance to administrative reform exists because change generates some amount of uncertainty and insecurity among individuals or groups preferring the status quo and they therefore make attempts to resist the reform in order to avoid the uncertainty and insecurity resulting from the implementation of the reform.

It seems to me that the element of resistance need not necessarily be present in any administrative reform. This is too strict a criterion for defining administrative reform and excludes those attempts to change the administration that do not meet any resistance. All attempts to change the administration or the administrators for the better should be considered as administrative reforms, whether such attempts meet resistance or not. In other words, the element of resistance is not a distinguishing charac-

teristic of administrative reform.<sup>15</sup>

Even if one accepts Caiden's assumption that resistance is a concomitant of the process of administrative reform, how does one identify or measure such resistance? How can the researcher on administrative reform operationalize this element of resistance? Furthermore, what Caiden has failed to realize is that it is not just the existence of resistance to the reform that is important but rather the *source* and *strength* of such resistance. The significance of resistance to administrative reform (or any other type of reform) is that if the resistance is "overwhelming" it would mean that the reform would not be implemented. Consequently, if there is resistance to a particular administrative reform, the sponsors have to identify the source of such resistance as well as its strength in order to ascertain whether the resistance can be overcome or not.<sup>16</sup>

In sum, then, Caiden's definition of administrative reform is rejected on the following three grounds: 1) it

<sup>15</sup> Another related criticism of Caiden's assumption regarding resistance to administrative reform has been provided by Alan J. Wyner in his review of Caiden's book. Wyner wrote: "...the very general, abstract level at which Caiden writes allows him to speak of the appearance of administrative resistance as a uniformity....[But] To assume that a change will be resisted or accepted by the entire organization is too simplistic." See Alan J. Wyner, "Change and Reform in Administrative Units," *Journal of Comparative Administration*, Vol. II, No. 2 (August 1970), pp. 247-248.

<sup>16</sup> "Administrative reformers should be sensitive to conditions that influence receptivity, or resistance, to reform at any given time." Abelardo G. Samonte, "Patterns and Trends in Administrative Reforms," in Lee and Samonte (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 296.

<sup>14</sup> Caiden elaborates on his definition of administrative reform but does not substantiate his assumption that resistance accompanies administrative reform. See Caiden, *op. cit.*, pp. 65-68.

does not indicate what the goals of administrative reform are; 2) it does not provide an adequate description of the content of administrative reform; and 3) the element of resistance is not a distinguishing feature of administrative reform. The definition of administrative reform to be adopted here must not suffer from the same shortcomings if it is to be useful. However, before proceeding to define administrative reform, a few more definitions of administrative reform by other scholars will be reviewed.

Various definitions of administrative reform were offered by the participants of the seminar on "Administrative Reform and Innovations" organized by both the Government of Malaysia and the Eastern Regional Organization for Public Administration (EROPA) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in June 1968. In his report on the seminar, the moderator Hahn-Been Lee said:

...there was a genuine consensus from the very beginning of the Seminar on what we really mean by administrative reform. In this Seminar, administrative reform did not mean mere change of names and structures of some administrative organization. Rather, it meant changing the behaviour of those involved.<sup>17</sup>

However, this is a very misleading statement because a detailed analysis of the fifteen seminar papers reveals that 1) quite a few of the authors did not define administrative reform

explicitly; 2) of those who defined administrative reform explicitly, some stressed the institutional aspect while others focused on the attitudinal aspect; 3) some scholars, notably Abueva, combined both the institutional and attitudinal aspects in his definition of administrative reform; and 4) there were participants who defined administrative reform in such a vague manner as to include either the attitudinal or the institutional aspects depending on the focus of the author, or both aspects also. In other words, the "genuine consensus" on the meaning of administrative reform mentioned by Lee above is more apparent than real.

Of the eight participants who did not define administrative reform explicitly, six (Banerjee, Chang, Goodarzi, Hsueh, Puthuchery and Tang) focused only on the institutional aspect.<sup>18</sup> The other two participants — Amara and Khosla — were more aware of the attitudinal aspects of administrative reform. In his paper, Amara placed more emphasis on the attitudinal rather than the institutional aspects. He wrote:

This paper seeks to complement those studies which emphasize structural re-

<sup>18</sup> All the six papers can be found in *ibid.*, at the following pages: Ajit M. Banerjee, "Administrative Reforms in India — A Synoptic Review," pp. 323-358; Chin-Chien Chang, "Essentials for Administrative Reform and Innovations," pp. 242-257; Manouchehr Goodarzi, "A Brief Account of Administrative Reform in Iran," pp. 179-197; S.S. Hsueh, "Administrative Reform in Hong-Kong," pp. 100-134; Mavis C. Puthuchery, "The Operations Room in Malaysia as a Technique in Administrative Reform," pp. 277-380; and Henry C. Tang, "The Administrative Reforms of the Republic of China," pp. 447-451.

<sup>17</sup> Eastern Regional Organization for Public Administration, *Seminar on Administrative Reform and Innovations*, Vol. II (Kuala Lumpur, 1968), p. 3.

form rather than changes in administrative behavior. If we compare the administrative system with a transportation system, it may be observed that many writings on administrative reform have been just like a concentrated inquiry on the engine and design of various vehicles. In contrast, this paper is primarily concerned with the human aspect — the “drivers.”<sup>19</sup>

Khosla, on the other hand, emphasized the importance of *both* aspects of administrative reform. According to him, one of the most important lessons to be learned from the Indian experience in administrative reform was that:

Structural changes in organization will not be of much help unless the human factor in administration is suitably tackled. In formulating proposals for reforms, the effort should not be confined to improving organization and procedures by the scientific management approach. It is equally essential to pay attention to the dynamics of group behavior.<sup>20</sup>

Under the second category of those defining administrative reform, Suk-Choon Cho's definition of administrative reform as “a conscious human effort to introduce changes into the behavior and performance of administrators” emphasized the attitudinal rather than the institutional aspects.<sup>21</sup> There is, however, no clearcut exam-

ple of a definition of administrative reform that stresses the institutional aspects.<sup>22</sup> Jose V. Abueva was the only seminar participant who combined both the institutional and attitudinal aspects in his definition of administrative reform. He viewed administrative reform “as essentially a deliberate attempt to use power, authority and influence to change the goals, structure or procedures of the bureaucracy, and, therefore, to alter the behavior of its personnel.”<sup>23</sup> Finally, three participants — Lee, Samonte, and Siagian — provided very vague definitions of administrative reform which could include either or both the institutional and attitudinal aspects.<sup>24</sup>

Of all the definitions considered above, Abueva's definition appears to be the most useful because he focuses on both the attitudinal and institutional aspects of administrative reform. The only weakness of his definition is that the goals of administrative reform are not identified.<sup>25</sup> In other words, the definition of administrative reform to be adopted here must indicate what the goals of administrative reform are and combine both the institutional and attitudinal aspects of reform.

<sup>19</sup> Amara Raksasataya, “Preparing Administrators for National Development: Thailand's Experience,” in Lee and Samonte (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 200.

<sup>20</sup> J.N. Khosla, “Administrative Reform in India: Perspective and Lessons,” in Lee and Samonte (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 282.

<sup>21</sup> Suk-Choon Cho, “Two Reforms Under the Military Regime in Korea: A Comparative Analysis,” in Lee and Samonte (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 125.

<sup>22</sup> An example of this is Finan and Dean's definition which is not included in the ERO-PA seminar. See Finan and Dean, *op. cit.*, p. 437.

<sup>23</sup> Abueva, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

<sup>24</sup> Lee and Samonte (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 7, 96, 288.

<sup>25</sup> Abueva does not identify the goals of administrative reform in his definition but he does so in another section of his paper. See Abueva, *op. cit.*, pp. 25-26.

### Goals

What are the goals of administrative reform? For what reasons are administrative reforms usually carried out? These are important questions to ask and answer because

If we desire societies to be well administered; if, furthermore, we realize it is merely question-begging to urge greater administrative efficiency; and if, finally, we know we cannot reasonably speak of administrative reforms without defining the goals we wish to realize, we cannot evade the attempt to define the ideals to be sustained by the machinery of the state.<sup>26</sup>

Furthermore, according to Yehezkel Dror, "clarification of the overall goals of an administrative reform is a fundamental requisite for success."<sup>27</sup> Similarly, Arne F. Leemans has argued that "the degree to which objectives are attained is a principal yardstick in judging the success or failure of administrative reform programmes."<sup>28</sup> In short, administrative reform can only succeed if its goals are clearly stated at the outset; and, in turn, the evaluation of the effectiveness of the reform is based on the degree of goal attainment. Thus, for all the above reasons it is necessary to identify the major goals of administrative reform.

<sup>26</sup> Henry S. Kariel, "Goals for Administrative Reform in Developing States: An Open-Ended Design," in Ralph Braibanti (ed.), *Political and Administrative Development* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1969), p. 150.

<sup>27</sup> Yehezkel Dror, "Strategies for Administrative Reform," *Development and Change*, Vol. II, No. 2 (1970-71), p. 22.

<sup>28</sup> Arne F. Leemans, "Administrative Reform: An Overview," *Development and Change*, Vol. II, No. 2 (1970-71), p. 10.

In his seminar paper, "The Objectives of Governmental Reorganization," Marshall E. Dimock said that the primary aim of reorganization was "to make programs more effective in terms of accomplishing group goals."<sup>29</sup> Put differently, the major goal of reorganization is to increase the level of organizational effectiveness. In the same vein, Finan and Dean have contended that

The central objective of administrative reform is to develop and put into effect whatever changes are required to enable the administrative organs of a government to execute public policies in an effective and responsible manner.<sup>30</sup>

It should be noted here that this objective of improving administrative effectiveness is related to the more general objective of attaining national development goals because administrative reform is one of the primary measures employed by governments in the developing countries to achieve development goals.<sup>31</sup>

Apart from the above goal of administrative reform, there are three other objectives which have been classified by Mosher as follows: 1) those goals related to the changing of operating policies and programs and which include expansion of scope and extent of programs, shifts in program emphasis, and shifts in loci of power; 2) those goals concerned with problems of personnel, individuals or

<sup>29</sup> Marshall E. Dimock, "The Objectives of Governmental Reorganization," *Public Administration Review*, Vol. XI, No. 4 (Autumn 1951), p. 234.

<sup>30</sup> Finan and Dean, *op. cit.*, p. 438.

<sup>31</sup> Carlos P. Ramos, "Foreword," in Lee and Samonte (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. vii.

groups; and 3) those goals intended to counter or respond to pressures and threats from outside the organization.<sup>32</sup>

One final point remains to be made regarding the goals of administrative reform. Abueva has distinguished between manifest or declared goals and undisclosed or undeclared goals of administrative reform. Examples of manifest goals are efficiency, economy, effectiveness, political responsibility, improved service, streamlined organization and procedures, coordination, unified direction, and indigenization or ethnic representation. Undeclared goals of administrative reform are usually not disclosed to the public because of ideology and expediency; and the most common undisclosed objective appears to be political control of policy and personnel.<sup>33</sup>

Bearing the above points in mind, I can now proceed to define administrative reform. For the purposes of this analysis, administrative reform is defined as *a deliberate attempt to change both a) the structure and procedures of the public bureaucracy (i.e., reorganization or the institutional aspect) and b) the attitudes and behavior of the public bureaucrats involved (i.e., the attitudinal aspect), in order to promote organizational effectiveness and attain national development goals.* It should be noted here that this definition applies only to those organizations that are committed to the achievement of the

goals of national development, i.e., public or governmental organizations. This definition is applicable to private or non-governmental organizations only to the extent that such organizations are involved in the realization of such development objectives.

### Approaches

I have so far dealt with two aspects of the concept of administrative reform: its meaning and the reasons for which it is usually undertaken. The focus is now on the third aspect — approaches to administrative reform or the various ways in which such reform is carried out.

In his book Caiden devotes a chapter to "Perspectives of Administrative Reform" in which he identifies five different national approaches to administrative reform among the developed nations *vis.*: the French, Prussian, Bolshevik or Russian, British and American approaches. Caiden's analysis of these approaches is not very systematic as the items he has employed to describe such approaches are not comparable except for the following four aspects: whether the reformers are outsiders or part of the system, how reform is imposed (from above or below), the influence of ideology on reform, and whether reform followed revolution or not.<sup>34</sup> Not surprisingly, his comments regarding these approaches are very general. However, his first two observations are important and should be noted:

- 1) Administrative reform is related

<sup>32</sup> Mosher, *op. cit.*, pp. 137-139

<sup>33</sup> Abueva, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

<sup>34</sup> Caiden, *op. cit.*, pp. 90-96.

to the specific cultural environment. No single approach is correct or better than any other.

- 2) Culture-bound approaches may not be exportable or, if they are, only to countries sharing general cultural features.<sup>35</sup>

Turning his attention to the newly independent states, Caiden observes that the "fact of independence alone makes administrative reform imperative" because such countries have to establish their own indigenous administration and to find immediate solutions to a whole host of administrative problems. Caiden argues that administrative reform is required to solve all these problems and the approach to be adopted would depend on the following factors: the nature of the local culture, the importance of tradition, the calibre of the new leadership, the type of political regime in power, the strength and diversity of internal and external opponents, and the availability and mobility of resources.<sup>36</sup>

What are the different approaches to administrative reform undertaken by the new states? Caiden has classified such approaches into four categories: 1) those countries which do not subscribe to administrative reform and are committed to the status quo; 2) those countries with a "purely pragmatic approach" to administrative reform, i.e., reforms are improvised when the need arises and there is no formal or institutional set-up for implementing administrative reforms; 3) those countries

which are deeply committed to administrative reform as a technique of solving their administrative problems and are equipped with "established formal machinery for the initiation and evaluation of reforms;" and 4) those countries which have experienced reform imposed from the outside.<sup>37</sup>

This is not a very useful classification for three reasons. First, it is a confused classification because the first three categories are based on the criterion of degree of commitment on the part of the countries to administrative reform, while the fourth category is based on the criterion of source of the reform: either internal or external. In other words, the criteria used by Caiden in his classification are of different dimensions.<sup>38</sup> Secondly, the last three categories are not mutually exclusive because the source of the reforms in the second and third categories need not necessarily be internal only; reforms from the outside can also be improvised when the occasion demands or be established on a more formal basis. Finally, no specific examples have been provided by Caiden to illustrate his four categories.

In his paper, "Administrative Reform as a Problem of Dynamic Balancing," which was first read at the Round Table on Administrative Reform and Development held in Beirut,

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 100-101.

<sup>38</sup> See Arthur L. Kalleberg, "The Logic of Comparison: A Methodological Note on the Comparative Study of Political Systems," *World Politics*, Vol. XIX, No. 1 (October 1966), pp. 73-74.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 96-97.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 99-100.

Lebanon, on April 11-18, 1970, Fred W. Riggs makes two very important points with regard to administrative reform. First, he argues that the effectiveness of an organization depends on two factors: its ability to solve problems as well as the "weight of the problems it is called on to solve."<sup>39</sup> In short, Riggs is saying that there are two methods of improving administrative performance: either by improving the capabilities of the organization, or by reducing "the burdens it has to bear." The latter method has not been emphasized by administrative reformers at all; instead, most reform efforts have focused on strategies for enhancing the capacities of organizations such as government agencies. Using an analogy, Riggs says that "the food problem can be tackled by reducing the number of mouths to be fed as well as by increasing the supply of food." The same lesson has to be learned in administrative reform for "administrative capacities can be enhanced by reducing the number of problems to be solved by government as well as by strengthening the capacity of government to solve problems."<sup>40</sup>

The second point to note is Riggs' answer to the question, "How shall we proceed to strive for administrative reform in any given country?" He answers this question by referring to a medical analogy. The treatment of any particular case of diabetes depends on 1) a general understanding of the dynamics of the

disease and 2) an accurate knowledge of the patient's condition. In administrative reform, however, treatment depends on the latter rather than the former because there is no general theoretical framework for analyzing administrative reform, and, accordingly, "We must try to determine what each country, at each stage of its own development, needs to do in order to advance."<sup>41</sup> An additional requirement is that the reforms must be made by reformers and leaders within the country concerned and not by outsiders or foreigners.

One final point to note about the various strategies to administrative reform is that they vary in scope from the most comprehensive to the extremely narrow. The focus of the comprehensive strategy is on the entire administrative machinery of government as a whole and not on specific agencies, procedures or routines. In other words, changes or innovations are introduced into the public bureaucracy on a government-wide basis and not on a piece-meal basis. This means that if comprehensive administrative reform is to be attempted serious consideration must be given to such factors as the timing of the reform, its terms of reference, as well as the personnel and financial resources required for such an effort.<sup>42</sup> Consequently, comprehensive

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 131-132.

<sup>42</sup> Public Administration Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, "Administrative Improvement for National Development: Some Major Issues and Approaches," *International Social Development Review*, No. 2 (New York: United Nations, 1970), p. 42.

<sup>39</sup> Riggs, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 129-130.

administrative reform is only carried out periodically.

How useful is the comprehensive strategy? According to the Public Administration Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, the comprehensive approach to administrative reform is not very useful in the case of the developing countries because "comprehensive reform efforts are said to cause trouble by trying to do too much too soon."<sup>43</sup> Most of these countries still lack the necessary skills and resources for initiating comprehensive administrative reforms. Another shortcoming of the comprehensive strategy is that its comprehensiveness is relative in the sense that "even the most comprehensive reform deals only with a few facets of administrative reality: it must get support from other reforms."<sup>44</sup>

It has been seen that the comprehensive approach to administrative reform *per se* is not suited to the needs of most developing countries. The alternative that is left is the incremental strategy or "islands of excellence" approach.<sup>45</sup> Unlike the comprehensive approach, the incremental strategy views administrative reform in more

specific terms. Reform is usually carried out on a piece-meal basis. In other words, "an administrative reform is always 'a single step' which, in isolation, might be 'only a minor departure' but which, in connection with 'a chain of subsequent steps,' leads to innovation."<sup>46</sup>

The incremental approach is superior to the comprehensive strategy on two counts. First, the former is a gradual approach and encourages experimentation and increases the confidence of the reformers because it enables them to make the necessary adjustments if the proposed changes are not wholly satisfactory. This is possible only when reforms are introduced on an incremental basis as no drastic changes are involved. A second advantage of the incremental strategy is its limited scope which ensures that there is usually less outside interference when the reform is being initiated.<sup>47</sup>

However, the incremental approach cannot survive on its own for long without any support from the political leadership. Unlike the comprehensive strategy which "is better suited to catch the imagination of top political leadership," the incremental approach is usually not supported by the political leaders because of its limited objectives. It follows, then, that an incremental administrative reform has to broaden its scope in order to receive the political support it requires for its survival. Conversely, a comprehensive administrative

<sup>43</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>44</sup> Hahn-Been Lee, "The Concept, Structure and Strategy of Administrative Reform: An Introduction," in Lee and Samonte (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>45</sup> For more details, see Clarence Thurber, *Islands of Development: A Political and Social Approach to Development Administration in Latin America* (Bloomington, Indiana: American Society for Public Administration, Comparative Administration Group, 1966).

<sup>46</sup> Lee, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

<sup>47</sup> *Loc. cit.*

reform has to reduce its scope by focusing on specific aspects if it is to be successfully implemented. In short, both the comprehensive and incremental strategies to administrative reform are not contradictory or mutually exclusive. Rather; these two approaches supplement one another. Lee refers to the interdependence of these two strategies as a "dialectical continuum of reform strategy."<sup>48</sup>

Bearing the complementarity of the two approaches in mind, the question that arises is: Under what conditions should each of the two strategies be employed? There is no simple and clearcut answer to this question. However, some clues are provided by Lee's "matrix of optimum reform strategy," which is essentially a 2 x 2 table constructed by juxtaposing the variables of time and leadership. The result is the following figure:

hand, when both the timing and leadership are not favourable, the country concerned is not adequately prepared for administrative reform yet and therefore no strategy is recommended. In between these two extremes, the incremental approach is advocated: incremental strategy (A) is being used when the timing is favourable but not the leadership; while incremental strategy (B) is employed when the conditions are reversed, i.e., the leadership favours reform but the timing is not ripe.<sup>50</sup>

The timing and leadership are only two variables to be considered when implementing comprehensive administrative reform. A third variable, "risk acceptability" i.e., the degree of risk involved in initiating and implementing the administrative reform, must also be taken into account.<sup>51</sup> Since administrative reform

FIGURE 1. — A MATRIX OF OPTIMUM REFORM STRATEGY<sup>49</sup>

		TIME	
		Favourable	Unfavourable
LEADERSHIP	Favourable	Comprehensive strategy	Incremental strategy (B)
	Unfavourable	Incremental strategy (A)	No strategy

Briefly, the comprehensive approach should be used when the timing is suitable and the leadership is competent and promotes the implementation of the reform. On the other

involves both institutional and attitudinal changes which might not be accepted by those affected by the reform, the political leaders must as-

<sup>48</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>49</sup> Figure 1 is reproduced from *ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>50</sup> For more details about the matrix, see *ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

<sup>51</sup> Dror, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-28.

sess very carefully the risks involved in undertaking the reform on one hand, and weigh these risks against the risks in maintaining the status quo on the other hand.

For example, the degree of risk in implementing the reform will be high if the public bureaucracy is opposed to the reform for, say, reasons of its own vested interests. The government leaders, on the other hand, might be anxious to push through the reform in order to curb the power of these bureaucrats. In this case, the political leadership has to consider very carefully whether it is strong enough to meet the opposition from the civil servants if the reform is imposed; and whether, in the absence of reform, it will be replaced by the bureaucrats. Reform will only be undertaken by the political leadership "if the risk involved in continuing the existing situation is large, or if considerable gains may be expected."<sup>52</sup> Moreover, the degree of risk involved in undertaking reform is directly related to the scope of the reform effort — the broader the reform, the higher will be the risk incurred. Thus, a comprehensive reform strategy will incur a higher degree of risk than an incremental reform strategy.

In sum, the comprehensive strategy is employed in administrative reform when all three variables — timing, leadership and risk acceptability — are favourable. Conversely, the incremental approach is relied upon when some of these variables are unfavourable.

<sup>52</sup> Leemans, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

So far, I have examined the concept of administrative reform in terms of its definition, its rationale, and its strategies. It only remains for me to identify the various obstacles to administrative reform before concluding this paper.

### Obstacles

Caiden has identified seven "outstanding universal obstacles" to administrative reform namely: geography, history, technology, culture, economy, society and polity.<sup>53</sup> Geography is an impediment in the sense that the physical location, size or topography of a country might not be conducive to administrative reform. History is often employed as a reference point by both advocates and opponents of reform alike to substantiate their respective cases. It is an obstacle in so far as a country's attempt to promote administrative reform is constrained by its previous record in this area.

A third obstacle to administrative reform is the level of technology in a country. A country that is not technologically advanced will encounter more problems in administrative reform than another with a higher level of technology because in the case of the former, there is less pressure to provide administrative solutions for "complex social and administration problems."

Apart from geography, history and

<sup>53</sup> The following discussion is a summary of the major points of Caiden's Chapter 6, "Obstacles to Administrative Reform." For a more detailed account, see Caiden, *op. cit.*, pp. 166-183.

technology, certain cultural features of a society especially language, religion, race, kinship ties and other primordial attachments could prove obstructive to reform. For example, linguistic diversity gives rise to problems in communication among the population, while most religions tend to favour the status quo. Nationalism, local etiquette and values, and national complacency are other cultural hindrances to bureaucratic reform.

Fifth, the economy could pose obstacles to reform if there is scarcity of both financial resources and trained personnel. Scarcity of resources (both financial and non-financial) constitutes the most important economic obstacle to reform because reform requires a substantial investment of time, effort, and resources for its implementation. Apart from lack of capital, scarcity of trained personnel also poses a serious handicap to the planning and implementation of administrative reform.

Finally, both society in general and the polity in particular can hinder administrative reform efforts. Society itself could be an obstacle to reform insofar as it is inclined toward preservation of the status quo, and insofar as an attitude of indifference to administration prevails among the general population. The polity is a very important factor influencing the outcome of administrative reform because "the extent to which reformers are successful depends on astute political tactics and

manipulation of political forces within the society."<sup>54</sup>

Three important points need to be stressed with regard to the above checklist of obstacles to administrative reform. In the first place, there is some degree of overlap among the various obstacles especially among the cultural and social obstacles on one hand, and the economic and political impediments on the other. Secondly, the aforementioned obstacles seem to be more serious in the developing countries than in the developed ones. Thirdly, of all the above obstacles, the political factor appears to be the most significant one.

The importance of the political factor in the implementation of administrative reforms can be seen by referring to a few case studies on administrative reform. In the case of India for example, J. N. Khosla has argued that:

Administrative reforms can be implemented effectively only if they have a high-level political support and enlightened public opinion behind them. It is no less necessary to win the cooperation of the bureaucracy; but on issues where the bureaucracy has a stake in maintaining the status quo, high-level political intervention is necessary to give effect to the reforms.<sup>55</sup>

A second example is provided by Hong Kong where, according to S. S. Hsueh, attempts at administrative reform are being hindered by three political factors: the country's colonial status, public indifference to po-

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 181.

<sup>55</sup> Khosla, *op. cit.*, p. 283.

litics, and political uncertainty.<sup>56</sup> Perhaps, the best statement on the importance of the political factor in administrative reform is that made by Abelardo G. Samonte who wrote:

...the success of administrative reforms in effecting improvements in public administration depends to a large extent on simultaneous changes in the political system.... Administrative reform thrives best in an environment of good politics. In developing countries, improved politics means political modernization — a positive change in political values and attitudes, increased participation (both quantitatively and qualitatively) of various sectors and groups in the political process. It must be recognized, however, that administrative reforms must be suited to particular conditions and needs that characterize a country's state of political development at a given period.<sup>57</sup>

### Conclusion

The literature on the concept of administrative reform has been reviewed in the preceding four sections of the paper in terms of four foci: meaning, goals, approaches and obstacles. The above review of the literature is instructive insofar as it helps us to make an inventory of what is known about administrative reform and to identify the various research gaps in this area.

As far as the first benefit is concerned, our review of the literature reveals that there is no consensus among scholars of public administration concerning the meaning of ad-

ministrative reform. To be more specific, existing definitions of administrative reform are not perfect and suffer from two major shortcomings: 1) the non-identification of the goals of administrative reform; and 2) emphasis on either the institutional or attitudinal aspects of reform, but not on both aspects. Accordingly, a definition of administrative reform which attempts to avoid these weaknesses has been provided by the author. This definition of administrative reform is offered as a tentative one and I hope that it will be useful to those scholars interested in conducting empirical research on administrative reform in the new states of Asia and Africa because of its focus on *both* the institutional and attitudinal aspects of administrative reform.

There is less controversy regarding the goals, approaches and obstacles to administrative reform. The major goal of administrative reform is to improve the level of organizational effectiveness of the organization or organizations concerned. Associated with this goal of improving organizational effectiveness are other goals which are either declared or undisclosed by the government or groups associated with the reform efforts. With regard to the approaches to administrative reform, it can be seen that a combination of both the comprehensive and incremental strategies has been employed by those new states which rely on administrative reform as one of the means toward the attainment of national development

<sup>56</sup> S.S. Hsueh, "Ecology and Administrative Reform in Hong-Kong," in Lee and Samonte (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 242-243.

<sup>57</sup> Samonte, *op. cit.*, p. 299.

goals. But, the relative weight placed on each strategy depends on three major factors: the attitude of the political leadership toward the reform effort, the timing of the reform, and the degree of risk acceptability as perceived by the political leadership. Finally, there is a whole host of cultural, social, economic and political obstacles which hinder the process of administrative reform especially in the Afro-Asian countries.

The major and perhaps also the most important research gap revealed by the above review of the literature is the absence of any comparative study on administrative reform in several countries. Research on administrative reform takes the form of general theoretical analyses and specific case studies of administrative reform in various countries.<sup>58</sup> In

<sup>58</sup> For other examples of general theoretical analyses of administrative reform, see Allan R. Cohen, "The Human Dimensions of Administrative Reform: Towards More Differentiated Strategies for Change," *Development and Change*, Vol. II, No. 2 (1970-71), pp. 65-82; Hahn-Been Lee, "Bureaucratic Models and Administrative Reform," *Development and Change*, Vol. II, No. 2 (1970-71), pp. 52-64; and Moshe Weiss, "Towards a Comprehensive Approach to Government Reorganization," *Philippine Journal of Public Administration*, Vol. XI, No. 1 (January 1967), pp. 58-71. For other case studies of administrative reform, see K. Ankomah, "Reflections on Administrative Reform in Ghana," *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, Vol. XXXVI (1970), pp. 299-303; Rafael B. de Guzman, "Administrative Reform in the Philippines: An Overview," *Philippine Journal of Public Administration*, Vol. XII, No. 4 (1968), pp. 395-412; V.V. Moharir, "Administrative Reform in India," *Development and Change*, Vol. II, No. 2 (1970-71), pp. 83-97; Gilbert B. Siegel, "The Strategy of Public Administration Reform: The Case of Brazil," *Public Administration Review*, Vol. XXVI, No. 1 (March 1966), pp. 45-55; G.E. Caiden,

other words, the existing state of knowledge on administrative reform in the developing countries is essentially idiographic rather than nomothetic knowledge. In order to formulate universal generalizations on the process of administrative reform in the new states, more comparative studies on administrative reform must be conducted.

How should scholars of public administration undertake such comparative studies on administrative reform? What variables should they focus on in their comparison of the process of administrative reform in different countries? No final answers can be provided at this stage to these questions, but it seems to me that researchers embarking on cross-national studies on administrative reform can initiate their comparisons of the different nations' experiences in this area by concentrating on the following variables:

- 1) The *content* of the administrative reform, that is, both the institutional and attitudinal aspects.
- 2) The *goals* of the administrative reform regardless of whether such goals have been announced or un-

"Prospects for Administrative Reform in Israel," *Public Administration*, Vol. XLVI (London: Spring 1968), pp. 25-43; and Milton J. Esman, *Administration and Development in Malaysia: Institution Building and Reform in a Plural Society* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1972). Examples of works which combine both theoretical aspects and case studies are: Frederick C. Mosher (ed.), *Government Reorganization: Cases and Commentary* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1967); and Jose V. Abueva (ed.), *Perspectives in Government Reorganization* (Manila: College of Public Administration, University of the Philippines, 1969).

- disclosed by the political leadership.
- 3) The *approach* selected by the political leadership toward administrative reform especially the relative weight given to both the incremental and comprehensive strategies.
  - 4) The nature of the *environment* in which the administrative reform is being implemented, i.e., whether the environment favours reform or whether the reform effort is being hindered by the existence of various obstacles.
  - 5) The attitude of the *political leadership* toward administrative reform, i.e., whether it provides or withholds its sponsorship and support of the reform effort. This variable is perhaps the most crucial one because it is the political leadership of a country which first

decides on whether there is any need for administrative reform, and if so, what are the goals, contents and approaches to administrative reform. The political leaders also assess the extent to which the various environmental influences hinder or promote administrative reform.

The above list of five variables constitutes *one* way of approaching the comparative study of administrative reform in the new states. It is by no means the only method, nor are the five aspects mentioned exhaustive. At best, what is offered here is a tentative research strategy which needs to be refined and modified by actual empirical research.