

COUNTRY REPORT

Governance Reform in Thailand: Questionable Assumptions, Uncertain Outcomes

BIDHYA BOWORNWATHANA

This article examines the nature of governance reform in Thailand. The argument is that Thai citizens are not especially benefiting from the public reform initiatives of Thai governments because government reformers made four questionable assumptions about reform which have in turn produced uncertain outcomes and provided the opportunity for government reformers to avoid responsibility for their reform choices. First, the reformer support the belief that a global reform paradigm with ready-made reform packages exists which can be easily transplanted in the Thai public sector. Second, the reformers prefer to define success largely as reform output rather than reform outcomes or long-term reform consequences. Third, Thai government reformers have overemphasized the efficiency aspects of the new public management at the expense of other governance goals. Fourth, governance reform in Thailand has been portrayed as a managerial problem instead of a political one. The author supports his arguments by drawing on theoretical debates in the international literature on administrative reform, and relating these debates to the Thai case. Governance reform in Thailand is still at an early stage, but the role of unintended consequences is important to administrative reform. Furthermore, the Thai case may reflect governance reform in other countries as well.

Governance reform in Thailand is still at an early stage. But it is not too early to conclude that the assumptions governments in Thailand have made about reform and their avoidance of responsibility for the consequences of their reform choices have meant that Thai citizens are not especially benefiting from the public sector reform initiatives of recent governments.

Four major assumptions are held by the government reformers.¹ These, however, are not well grounded in the realities of Thai society. First, there is a belief among Thai government reformers that a global reform paradigm with ready-made reform packages exists that can easily be transplanted into the Thai public sector. Second, reform outcomes and long-term reform consequences among government reformers are neglected because the reformers prefer to define success largely as reform output. Third, Thai government reformers have emphasized especially the efficiency aspects of the new public management (NPM) as the most important objective of reform. Fourth, government reformers tend to portray governance reform as a managerial problem instead of a political one. I discuss each of these assumptions in order by drawing on theoretical debates in the international literature on administrative reform, and relation these debates to the Thai case. A brief background on the development of the Thai polity, however, is presented first.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF GOVERNANCE REFORM IN THAILAND

Administrative reform has been around as a subject for centuries in Thailand. But the idea of reforming the Thai public sector in accordance with the principles to the governance paradigm and the new public management (Rhodes 1996; Bowornwathana 1997a) is novel. For example, downsizing and privatization have been major policies of Thai governments only since the decade of the 1980s. But the major impetus for governance arrived very recently with the promulgation of the

new 1997 Constitution, which contains clauses in full support of the development of the governance paradigm in Thailand. The 1997 Constitution allows citizens to gain more control over the public sector. New governance institutional arrangements such as the ombudsman office, the national anticorruption office, and the administrative court system are mandated to facilitate the growth of a stronger, more transparent and open democratic society. At the same time, the economic crisis of 1997 has hastened the need for Thailand to have good governance in both the public and business sectors. A key condition laid out by international funding agencies such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the Asian Development Bank is that public sector reform in Thailand must be carried out in accordance with the principles of good governance (Royal Thai Government 1998; World Bank 1999).

As Thailand moves into the twenty-first century, the Thai political system is changing from a traditional polity originally dominated by bureaucrats and later on joined by businessmen (labeled first as a bureaucratic polity, and later on as liberal corporatism) to a new “civil” polity where citizens predominate as owners of government, and the public sector is run and organized under the principles of the governance paradigm. In a civil polity, the central government becomes smaller, and the civil society stronger. Power is moved outwards from the central government to the civil society and the market. The transformation process to a future civil polity also gradually replaces the monopoly held by the typical hierarchical ministry system to provide public services in the public sector with a new system of more autonomous, flexible, and efficient public agencies as service providers.

According to the new performance standards of a civil polity, government must be effectively accountable, open, and transparent. A civil polity is also especially concerned with the issue of fairness in public services and the adherence to the new international codes of behavior and ethics (Bowornwathana 1997a). In the new civil polity, citizens, rather than the traditional bureaucratic elite and businessmen are to exercise power. Though the old patron-client bonds may remain important in

Thailand, a new form of social arrangement called “partnerships” will play a central role by engaging the civil society to form partnerships among themselves, with the government, and with the private sector. Governing in a civil polity, it is proclaimed, will be less based on bureaucracy and more on such partnerships, nonbureaucratic organization designs, markets and contracts, external accountability, and social fairness. The management of public affairs will be focused on strengthening various kinds of partnerships across sectors (Thynne, 376-377; Farazmand 1999). All of these future changes may sound like a radical departure from the old polity to a new one based on a completely new political culture. However, one has to keep in mind that Thailand still has a long way to go. Governance reform for a civil polity has just started. Whether the change process will be gradual or volatile depends on Thailand’s ability to blend traditional elite preferences with the new governance values.

QUESTIONABLE ASSUMPTIONS, UNCERTAIN CONSEQUENCES

The direction governance reform is beginning to take in Thailand contains questionable assumptions and uncertain consequences. In other words, reform decisions and strategic choices are being made under questionable assumptions. There is, furthermore, a great deal of uncertainty as to whether the intended consequences, even if they could be pinpointed, will be achieved. Outcome uncertainty is obviously even greater about the unintended consequences of governance reform.² I explain below the four major assumptions held by government reformers in Thailand.

Assumption 1: The Existence of a Global Reform Paradigm

For Thai government reformers to believe in the universality of an administrative paradigm is nothing extraordinary. Yet the question of whether a new global reform paradigm for the public sector exists is becoming a central topic of discussion. If the

claims of a global reform paradigm such as NPM are justified, governance reform becomes an easier undertaking. A successful reform strategy adopted by a particular country can then be transferred to other countries regardless of their contextual differences. The diffusion of governance reform would then be a matter, for example, of imitation the executive agencies and citizen charters of Britain, the administrative court of France, the ombudsman office of Sweden, and the Freedom of Information Act of the United States. At a more general level, it is perceived that the new public management reform initiatives that have worked well in Western countries such as the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Australia, and Canada also should work smoothly in developing, and even in other developed, countries.

Successful stories about the New Zealand reform have tempted reform-seeking governments all over the world to think of New Zealand as the exemplar of successful administrative reform under the label “the new public management” (NPM). Numerous trips are made by government reformers from various countries to New Zealand to visit reform units of the New Zealand government. Upon returning from their study trips, government reformers push for reform proposals, which, to a great extent, follow the foreign reform blueprints that they were exposed to during their visits. British public sector reform experience has provided another example for several countries, particularly the Commonwealth nations, to follow.

There is a growing skepticism among scholars, however, as to whether there is really a global reform paradigm with universal applicability. Skeptics argue that one should not assume that a particular country’s successful reform model automatically could be transplanted into another country and become an instant success. Mohan Kaul concluded, for example, “A significant lesson (to) be drawn from the Commonwealth experiences is that while global concern exists about the nature of civil service reforms, there is no unique solution or approach” (Kaul, 149). Christopher Pollitt and Hikka Summa similarly argued that a uniform “one-track” picture of public sector reform is inaccurate (Pollitt and Summa). And Allen Schick warned that while the

New Zealand model has attracted worldwide attention through its extensive reforms, countries with different national administrative traditions should not emulate New Zealand's reforms (Schick). Still another eminent scholar, R.A.W. Rhodes, expressed skepticism: "Whether the New Zealand model can or should be transplanted (or even whether) NPM is a new 'global paradigm' because its ideas are ever changing and internally contradictory." Rhodes notes "To compound the problem, the similarities between reforms in different countries are often superficial, masking significant difference" (Rhodes 1999,122). Finally, another scholar, Alasdair Roberts (1997), in a study of administrative reform in the United States, pointed out that the performance-based organizations (PBO) plan provides some obvious challenges to the assumption of universality. Roberts argues that the American PBO plan will not work as well as Next Steps has in the United Kingdom. This is among other things, due to important differences between the American congressional system (in which the legislature has the ability to interfere at will in administration) and the British parliamentary system, differences in political culture and perceptions about the legitimacy of the national bureaucracy, and differences in the relative power of various actors such as public employee labor unions.

The proponents of a global reform paradigm admit that though significant country variations exist that may make uncertain the overall suitability of the paradigm for different regimes, the fact is that NPM measures have been widely implemented in many countries (Mascarenhaus; Peters and Savoie 1994; Carroll; Galnoor, Rosenbloom, and Yaroni, 394; and Masser). In practice, countries undertaking administrative reform search for examples from other countries that will provide them with new ideas and reform models. Though government reform is a series of significant renovations that differ substantially from one nation to the next, reformers in different countries can learn from one another. Therefore, one should not be surprised to discover that officials from the National Performance Review of Vice President Al Gore of the United States want to learn about the United Kingdom's

experiences with NPM. Nor should one be surprised to learn that the ideas in Thatcher's Next Steps initiatives were derived from the Swedish model (McDonald, 37-56). And one might observe that British executive agency initiatives appear under different labels in various countries; for example, crown entities in New Zealand, special operation agencies in Canada, free agencies in Denmark, And performance-based organizations in the United States.

Besides NPM, another possible contending global reform paradigm is "good governance." Supporters of good governance are loan and aid donor agencies such as the World Bank, UNDP, Asian Development Bank, International Monetary Fund, OECD, and ODA, and developed countries such as the United States and the European Union countries. The recent economic crisis in the Asia region has provided these international funding agencies with a golden opportunity to pressure Asian countries for administrative reform based on good governance in return for loans and aid. Like NPM, good governance has become a worldwide phenomenon (ODA 1993; World Bank 1994, 1997; UNDP 1995, 1998; OECD 1995; and ADB 19990, and has provided the Thai government with an opportunity, under the banners of international funding agencies, to impose changes on the traditional Thai bureaucracy.

The debate as to whether a global reform paradigm exists in public administration has implications for the thinking and practice of administrative reform in Thailand. Government reformers in Thailand tend to assume that reform blueprints from developed countries can be success fully put into practice. But as the reform literature indicates, disagreements exist as to the validity of the claim of a global reform paradigm. But there are reasons why Thai government reformers have inclinations to support a global reform paradigm.

First, government reformers, politicians, and bureaucrats are over whelmed with all kinds of work besides doing administrative reform. They do not work full-time on reform. Thus, they do not have the time to thoroughly work on reform of build an in-depth understanding of the problems and needs of the Thai bureaucracy. Politicians and

their political parties do not have their own reform team. Selected central bureaucrats work part-time on reform. They, in turn, do not have enough in-depth knowledge of the problems or feasible administrative reform solutions in Thailand. Their ability to assist elected politicians is rather limited. Furthermore, many bureaucrats are eager to do administrative reform work because it enhances their leverage in bureaucratic politics. For example, they may see an opportunity to gain more directive power over other agencies. The fate of agencies depends often on reform proposals they submit to the elected politicians for approval. Bureaucrats' hidden agendas are not always compatible with government reform policies.

Second, the 1997 economic crisis, having opened the door for international funding assistance for public sector reform, in turn, has provided economic incentives for government reformers to participate. Consultant fees, funds for research projects, free field trips abroad, and funds to organize conferences are examples of activities that may generate extra income and prestige for those involved in reform work. Needless to say, most Thai government reformers are eager to show interest and adopt reform packages backed by international funding agencies. Adopting a global reform paradigm is a good choice, from this perspective, because it silences domestic differences, pleases funding agencies, and presents convenient packages of ready-made reform programs. It is also easier to convince the public about the benefits of a reform proposal that has already worked well in a developed country than to build public support for a completely new indigenous reform program. A global reform paradigm also fulfills the desire of executive politicians for fast change and success.

There are several possible consequences resulting from a commitment to the idea of a global paradigm. First, the imported reform plan may not work, and intended outcomes may never materialize. Second, unintended consequences may create new and difficult problems. However, third, unintended consequences may take a long time to surface, thus allowing executive politicians to get off the hook. Executive politicians

want fast solutions. Therefore, fourth, government reformers fail to consider the possible unintended consequences of reform policies.

To conclude, one can say that there is a vicious circle involved in doing administrative reform work in Thailand. It starts with the appointment of a reform commission and the identification of the offices in charge of reform, the decision regarding reform plans, Cabinet resolutions, utilization of reform expenses such as field trips, research funds, organizing conferences, and administrative expenses. In the meantime, the mass media will publicize the decisions made by the Cabinet and the reform commission. While the good consequences of a reform program have not yet clearly emerged, the Thai coalition government usually collapses after less than two years in office. Then, the new coalition government will start the reform cycle again. The unstable nature of the Thai government further complicates and confuses reform work. For example, there are several master plans for administrative reform floating around in Thailand. Some belong to previous governments. Others may originate from past Cabinet decisions. Then there is the Prime Minister's policy address in Parliament, which contains plans for doing administrative reform. Which of these documents is then the official policy reform statement? These multiple directives obviously create confusion and uncertainty.

Assumption 2: Reform Outputs Matter, Not Outcomes

The second major assumption held by government reformers in Thailand is that reform outputs matter more than outcomes. Examples of reform outputs are: Cabinet approval of a master plan for reform; specific Cabinet resolutions on reform such as regulations limiting the growth of the bureaucracy; Prime Minister's orders; rules and regulations issued by the office of the Prime Minister; the passing of a reform bill in Parliaments; the establishment of a new office in charge of reform such as the

Administrative Reform Commission; the establishment of a new system of administrative court; the ability to provide services more efficiently; the arrangement of conferences and training on reform to indoctrinate government officials about the reform policies of government; and the publication of reform documents.

Government reformers pay little attention to reform outcomes. They do not ask questions such as, Who is going to benefit or suffer from the reform initiatives? What new problems will the reform plan create? Are the intended consequences fulfilled? What are the unintended consequences? The reformers ask, instead, Where is the reform output? In fact, reform may be sought for its political consequences. For example, the introduction of performance-based evaluation in Thailand may become a political instrument for one clique to get rid of the opposition clique in an organization. Reform also may be mindless. In this regard, the downsizing policy of the Thai government takes an across-the-board approach without considering differences in the various types of government organizations under reform. And sometimes reform has pernicious effects. Thus, the creation of “public organizations” in Thailand in February 1999 as a new type of organization gives chief executives more personnel and financial autonomy, and is supposed to result in a more efficient organization. But instead, the new “public organization” model has created confusion and worsened the morale of officials working in targeted agencies. Recent efforts by the Thai central government to decentralize power to local governments have intensified corruption practices at the local level.

There are several reasons why reform consequences are ignored. First, unlike reform outputs, reform outcomes are not highly visible. Manifestation of reform outcomes takes a long time, and there are many outside uncontrolled variables involved. Second, sometimes the originally intended reform goals are unclear and conflicting. Because the reform process takes a long time, the intended goals are often forgotten, and reform decisions are eventually based on bureaucratic politics. Third, in practice, the reform outcomes that were originally intended may no longer fit the

changing political and administrative milieu of the country. Fourth, government reformers do not stay long enough in office to witness reform outcomes. They are not accountable to the reform decisions they made while in office. Therefore, they do not really care about the reform outcomes. It is not surprising to find out that government reformer, especially bureaucrats are sometimes so preoccupied with their domains and power that they forget that governance reform's ultimate goal is citizen power and prosperity. Governance reform does not aim to prolong the existence of the bureaucratic polity or liberal corporatism, which have supported the power of the bureaucratic elite and businessmen at the expense of the citizens.

At the same time, scholars have increasingly pointed out that not enough attention has been given to the unintended consequences of reform (Boston 1999; Rhodes 1999). The current administrative reform literature suggests that there should be more concern with reform outcomes. Several leading scholars make notice of the potentially negative consequences of reform. For example, Paul C. Light.(1996,1997) has suggested that there is little evidence that the four tides of reform in the United States—namely, scientific management, the war on waste, the watchful eye, and liberation management—have been successful in making government more businesslike, less wasteful, more watchful, or more efficient and less expensive. In fact, he argued, they produce contradictory or crippling reform initiatives, which resulted in the thickening of government. It has been pointed out, too (Peters and Savoie 1996), that the reinventing government movement is having a negative impact on the integrity of the public service, and that the reinvention movement invites public distrust of government (Ruscio). Accordingly, there is also possible impact of public sector reform on standards of ethical probity within public services, particularly regarding instances of personal corruption (Gregory). Klitgaard (1997) also points out that very often most civil service reforms have adopted inappropriate strategies that have induced the collapse of government performance. International aid, Klitgaard claims, has emphasized the supply side (such as more staff, more experts, more

computers, more training, more rules and regulations) of capacity building while overlooking demand. Institutional adjustment deserves more consideration as a basis for reform (Klitgaard, 487-509). One of the most serious problems, according to Lynn (1996, 13-14), now confronting the NPM movement is the lack of good data to demonstrate the actual effects of the reforms. "Claims are plagued by selection bias, ex post rationalizations, irrefutable or unverifiable arguments, and the absence of either empirical or conceptual context. Hard evidence about effectiveness often cannot be obtained for a reasonable time, and in such circumstances decisions to proceed with a reform might be made without conclusive data about its likely impact" (Lynn, 13-14). R.A.W. Rhodes pointed out that NPM is a prime example of the sour laws of unintended consequences in action. The perverse consequences of the UK reform have been felt in increased fragmentation, a loss of accountability, increased difficulties of coordination, and a decline in public service ethics (Rhodes 1998:19). M. Shamsul Haque (1998; 1999) argues that pro-market public service reforms (the inclination to restructure the public sector in favor of market forces) are likely to diminish public confidence in the public service, and thus weaken its legitimacy. Market values such as efficiency, productivity, cost-effectiveness, competition, and profitability are becoming more dominant while government values of accountability, neutrality, responsiveness, integrity, equity, responsibility, impartiality, benevolence, and justice are becoming marginal (Haque 1998, 16-17; 1999, 309-326). Finally, Moshe Maor (1999) points out that under the auspices of NPM, political executives lose control over the implementation of their policies. Such a loss, Maor hypothesizes makes them hunger, therefore, for more control over the bureaucracy. "The striking outcome of this process is that senior servants who are removed from policy making and thus supposed to be less political find their positions becoming more insecure due to the political executives' desire for more control" (Maor, 5).

Assumption 3: NPM Is Preferred to Governance

The third assumption of Thai government reformers is that NPM reform strategy and measures are preferred to governance reform. The objective of NPM is primarily to improve the efficiency of the public sector with management methods from the field of management and the private sector.³ Meanwhile, efficiency is only one of the concerns of the governance paradigm besides accountability, transparency, openness, fairness, and equity. Good governance therefore contains broader reform strategies than NPM. The objective of good governance is to strengthen the institutions of civil society, and to transform government into a more open, responsive, accountable, and democratic system. In this respect, new public management is a component of the broader strategy of good governance (Minogue, Polidano, and Hulme, 6). While NPM represents the Public Administration as Management paradigm (Henry, 26-52), governance is considered by some scholars to be a new approach to public administration (Frederickson, 78-96).

There are several reasons why Thai government reformers choose NPM> First, NPM is easier to implement because it has concrete efficiency improvement techniques derived from the management school. Examples of these techniques are reengineering, efficiency scrutiny, market testing, ISO 9002, streamlining methods, performance measurement and evaluation, and cost-per-unit analysis. Second, NPM techniques have indices that can be used to measure success or failure of reform. Thus, government reformers can claim success by showing the statistics. Third, progress in efficiency improvement of public services can be empirically shown to the public customers. For example, requests for specific licenses now take less time for approval; paying taxes involves less paperwork; and, the issuing of citizen identification cards now takes less time. Fourth, a customer-oriented government does not threaten the power base of government agencies. Therefore, government officials are willing to put

up signs notifying the maximum time to be spent in obtaining specific services from them. Fifth, the call of NPM for more market competition in public services opens the door for private entrepreneurs and the business elite to acquire government contracts and purchase the privatized government assets (Haque 1998, 16-17).

However, scholars have warned that the efficiency paradigm of NPM over emphasizes efficiency at the expense of other more important values, such as accountability and equality of public services. For example, in Hong Kong, Anthony Cheung (1996) pointed out that public sector reform cannot be adequately understood within an efficiency paradigm. One serious problem emerging from the introduction of executive agencies in the United Kingdom is the blurring of ministerial responsibilities and public accountability. Furthermore, one can argue that what Thailand urgently needs, like most developing countries, is good governance, not just more management efficiency. This point may be less obvious for some developed countries where accountability is more widely practiced, and corruption better curtailed than in many developing countries.

Assumption 4: Reform Is a Managerial, Not a Political Problem

The last assumption made by government reformers in Thailand is that administrative reform is a managerial problem, not a political one. Government reformers have failed to conceptualize administrative reform as a political phenomenon. In reform commission meetings there is not much discussion, therefore, about “who gains and who loses” from a particular reform proposal. Rather, the discussions are about the “how-to” of management reform. Under a managerial perspective, reform becomes a matter of efficiency improvement through the application of NPM methods and the reinforcement of managerial autonomy of chief executives.

There are reasons for government reformers to take such an ostensibly apolitical position. First, common sense tells us that it is unusual for bureaucrats and elected politicians to admit that their reform proposals have political motives. Government reformers always claim that their reform proposals are well-thought-out plans that are above politics and will benefit the people and democracy. Second, the decision to treat administrative reform as a management problem enables government reformers to bypass the complex political and social-economic realities of the country. If administrative reform is a management problem, then reform is a problem that requires only management solutions for which there is always a current stock. But if administrative reform is a political puzzle, then solutions are more difficult or sometimes impossible to find. Certainly, there are no fashionable solutions lying around. Third, the perception of administrative reform as a management problem is favorable to the spread of NPM Profit-seeking consultants from the private sector who have close access to loan decisions of international funding agencies such as the World Bank have accelerated the managerial perspective reform with their NPM ideas and pro-market reforms (Saint-Martin, 533-569). Fourth, the management perspective helps government reformers who are stakeholders to hide the political aspects of reform. When the definition of the problem is technically managerial, the question of who gets what, when, how, and why is thought to be irrelevant.

On the other hand, proponents of political approach regard administrative reform as inherently a political phenomenon. The diffusion of NPM methods must be understood as containing political motives with possible serious repercussions on the power structure of the society. In Thailand, administrative reform is highly political (Bowornwathana 1989, 1994, 1995, 1996a-d, 1997a-c, 1998, 1999a-b, forthcoming). The success of reform consequently rests on a strong political will. But decisions about administrative reform are very much in the hands of the permanent bureaucrats. Allowing bureaucrats to reform themselves, though, creates concern about their willingness to separate their self-interests from reform proposals and their

implementation. To what extent are bureaucrats likely to sacrifice their bureaucratic and career interests on the altar of any reform that threatens them? The likely answer to this question is nil. Bureaucrats, however, will have much influence over the shape of reform. In a bureaucratic polity such as Thailand, the chance for bureaucrats to control the agenda of reform, its pace, and, above all, its execution, is high. There is legitimate concern that the reform process means dressing up “bureaucratic wolves as sheep.” The positions made available through the new governance mechanisms (such as the administrative court, the ombudsman office, the money-laundering office, and the national anti corruption office) will be filled mostly by former government officials. If this is so, then the old question of “who guards the guardians” in these new monitoring agencies will be problematic, certainly in part because civil society in Thailand is still too weak to perform these monitoring functions independently and effectively.

Administrative reform must be seen as a political phenomenon because implicitly, at least, it redistributes power and perquisites. By looking at administrative reform as a political phenomenon, we also are alerted to the intended and unintended consequences of reform. What happens after reform? Do the executive politicians become more powerful than the permanent bureaucrats, for example? A political focus also allows us to see the distinctiveness of doing “public” sector reform. It should lead us to question the extent to which management techniques from the private sector can be used in the public sector (Larson). A political perspective, in addition, may uncover critical aspects of reform such as the problem of corruption, which is likely the consequence of political, rather than purely administrative, dysfunction. A political perspective, in sum, will look at the political effects of reform and ask, for example, whether political control of the bureaucracy increased or decreased after governance reform (Christensen).

CONCLUSION

Governance reform is moving ahead in the new century under questionable assumptions and with a high degree of uncertainty about its consequences. The decisions and actions of government in administrative reform are based on four questionable assumptions: that there is a global reform paradigm; that reform outputs matter more than outcomes; that NPM is the preferred modality of governance reform; and that, consequently, reform is a managerial rather than a political matter.

The role of unintended consequences is important to administrative reform. A singular focus on management reform, however, will lead us to overlook that. That has occurred in Thailand. Indeed, it is possible that the Thai case, as presented here, may reflect “governance reform” in other developing countries, and perhaps in developed countries as well. That pattern can be described in the following way: first, look for an exemplar of reform; second, look at reform as a matter of seemingly soluble management technique rather than of seemingly insoluble issues of politics; third, assume that there is a global syndrome of administrative reform that can be borrowed; fourth, proceed on the reform path without careful evaluation of consequences, attention to detail, or the role of implementation (who is implementing what under whose guidance); fifth, proceed under the cover that administrative reform has no implications for the distribution or redistribution of power and prerequisites.

While it is not clear whether the reform process as it is unfolding in Thailand has universal applicability among the developing countries, the prospect that it might be anything but remote. If that is the case, reform may be an illusion, mistaking what is peripheral for what is central. Reforming management and the bureaucracy is important, no doubt, but it is hard to imagine that such reforms will have significant effects on the improvement of society without more fundamental reforms of the governance process.

NOTE

1. The term “governance reformers” is used here to refer to ministers, politicians, bureaucrats, academicians, and individuals who are directly involved in doing reform committees and other related committees and as advisers to the prime minister and the cabinet on reform, and are government officials acting as “ staffs “ for the government to do reform work.
2. The fact that scholars have given insufficient attention to the unintended consequences of reform is noted recently by scholars such as R.W.A. Rhodes (1999) and Jonathan Boston (1999). Another scholar, Torben Beck Jorgensen (1999) pointed out that the Danish public sector is in an in-between time: it is moving away from the classic model, heading in no specific direction. It is a phenomenon that most Western public sectors are experiencing (Jorgensen, 565). Indeed, the difficulty with doing administrative reform work is cautioned by scholars such as Gerald E. Caiden (1999).
3. According to Christopher Hood (1991), the doctrines of NPM are; (1) hands on professional management in the public sector; (2) explicit standard and measures of performance; (3) greater emphasis on output controls; (4) shift to desegregation of units in the public sector; (5) shift to greater competition in the public sector; (6) stress on private sector styles of management practice; (7) stress on greater discipline and parsimony in resource use. R.A.W. Rhodes (1996) parses NPM to two components: managerialism and the new institutional economics. Managerialism refers to introducing private sector management methods to the public sector. It stresses hands-on professional management, explicit standards and measures of performance, managing by results, value for money, and more recently, closeness to the customer. The new institutional economics refers to the introduction of incentive structures ((such as market competition) into public

services. It stresses desegregating bureaucracies, greater competition through contracting-out and quasi markets, and consumer choice (Rhodes, 655).

References

- Asian Development Bank. 1999. *Governance in Thailand: Challenges, Issues, and Prospects*. Manila: Programs Department (West), Division III and Strategy and Policy Office, Asian Development Bank, April.
- Boston, J. 1996. The Use of Contraction in the Public Service. *Australian Journal of Public Administration* 55(3): 105-110.
- _____. 1999. New Zealand's Model of Public Management: The Promise and the Reality. *NIRS review* (spring): 15-18.
- Bowornwathana, B.1998. *Public Policies in a Bureaucratic Polity*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Political Science Association, Washington, D.C.
- _____. 1989. Transfers of Bureaucratic Elite by Political Bosses: The Question of Political versus Bureaucratic Accountability. *Asian Review of Public Administration* 1(1): 18-37.
- _____. 1994. Administrative Reform and Regime Shifts: Reflections on the Thai Polity. *Asian Journal of Public Administration* 16(2): 152-164.
- _____. 1995. Responses of Public Administration System of Thailand to Global Challenges. In S.H. Salleh and L.V. Carrion, eds, *Globalization and the Asian Public Sector*. Kuala Lumpur: The Asian and Pacific Development Center. 365-430.
- _____. 1996a. The Politics of Reform of the Secretariat to the Prime Minister. *Australian Journal Of Public Administration* 55(4): 55-63.

- . 1996b. The Phenomenon of New Ministries and the Politician-Bureaucrat Perspective. *Asian Review of Public Administration* 8(2): 23-32.
- . 1996c. Political Realities of Local Government Reform in Thailand. In S. Kurosawa, T. Fujiwara, and M. Reform, eds., *New Trends in Public Administration for the Asia-Pacific Region: Decentralization*. Tokyo: Local Autonomy College, Ministry of Home Affairs.79-88.
- . 1996d. Democratic Reform Visions and the Reinvention of Thai Public Officials. *Asian Review of Public Administration* 8(1): 40-49.
- . 1997a. Transforming Bureaucracies for the 21st Century: The New Democratic Governance Paradigm. *Public Administration Quarterly* 21 (3): 294-308.
- . 1997b. *Thailand: Bureaucracy under Coalition Governments*. Paper presented at the International conference on Civil Service Systems in Comparative Perspective, Indiana University, Bloomington, April 5-9.
- . 1997c. The Governance of the Bangkok Metropolis: The Old System, the New City, and Future Governance. In J. S. Edralin, ed., *Local Governance and Local Economic Development: A New Role for Asia Cities*. Research Report Series No. 2. Nagoya, Japan: United Nations Centre for Regional Development. 87-114.
- . 1998. Bangkok Metropolitan Administration into the Twenty-First Century: The Practice of Good Local Governance. In J.S.Edralin,ed., *Metropolitan Governance and Planning in Transition: Asia-Pacific Cases*. Research Report Series No.31. Nagoya Japan: United Nations Centre for Regional Development. 147-164.
- . 1999a. Administrative Reform and the Politician-Bureaucrat Perspective: Vision, Processes, and Support for Reform. In H.S.Chan and H.K.Wong,eds.,

- Handbook of Comparative Public Administration in the Asia-Pacific*. New York: Marcel Dekker.69-77.
- _____. 1999b. Fiscal Reform of Bangkok Metropolitan Administration: From Bureaucracy to Governance. In J.S.Edralin and D.Mani,eds., *Financing Metropolitan Development: Public-Private Sector Roles*. Research Report Series No.35. Nagoya, Japan: United Nations Centre for Regional Development.67-92.
- _____. (forthcoming). The Politics of Governance Reform in Thailand. In A.Farazmand, ed., *Handbook of Comparative and Development Public Administration*, 2nd Ed. New York: Marcel Dekker.
- Caiden, G.E.1999. Administrative Reform-Proceed with Caution. *International Journal of Public Administration* 22(6): 815-832.
- Caroll,J.1995. The Rhetoric of Reform and Political Reality in the National Performance Review. *Public Administration Review* 55(May-June): 302-312.
- Cheung, A.B.L.1996. Efficiency as the Rhetoric: Public Sector Reform in Hong Kong Explained. *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 62(1): 31-48.
- Christensen, T. 1999. *Administrative Reform-Transforming the Relationship between Political and Administrative Leaders?* Paper Presented at the SOG Tokyo Conference, November 17-19.
- Farazmand, A. 1999. *Building Partnerships for Governance*. Background Paper for the plenary session, World Conference on Governance, Manila, June 3.
- Frederickson, H.G. 1997. *The Spirit of Public Administration*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Galnoor, I., D.H.Rosenbloom, and A Yaroni.1998. Creating New Public Management Reforms: Lessons from Israel. *Administration and Society* 30(4) : 393-420.
- Gregory, R.J.1999. Social Capital Theory and Administrative Reform: Maintaining Ethical Probity in Public Service. *Public Administration Review* 59(1): 63-75.

- Hague, M.S.1998. Legitimization Crisis: A Challenge for Public Service in the Next Century. *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 64(1): 13-26.
- _____. 1999. Relationship between Citizenship and Public Administration: A Reconfiguration. *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 65(3): 309-326.
- Henry, N.1999. *Public Administration and Public Affairs*, 7th ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Hood, C.1991. A Public Management for All Seasons? *Public Administration* 69(Spring): 3-19.
- _____. 1998. *The Art of the state: Culture, Rhetoric, and Public Management*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Jorgensen, T.B.1999. The Public Sector in an in-between Time: Searching for Near Public Values. *Public Administration* 77(3): 565-584.
- Karl, M.1996. Civil Service Reforms: Learning From Commonwealth Experiences. *Public Administration and Development* 16(2): 131-150.
- Klitgaard, R.1997. Cleaning Up and Invigoration the Civil Service. *Public Administration and Development* 17(5): 487-510.
- Larson,P.1997. Public and Private Values at Odds: Can Private Sector Values Be Transplanted into Public Sector Institution? *Public Administration and Development* 17(1): 123-130.
- Light, P.C.1996. *Thickening Government: The Federal Government and the Diffusion of Responsibility*. Washington D.C: Brookings Institution.
- _____. 1997. *The Tides of Reform: Making Government Work, 1945-1995*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Lynn, L. E.1996. *Public Management as Art, Science, and Profession*. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House.
- Manor, M. 1999. The Paradox of Managerialism. *Public Administration Review* 59(1) 5-18.

- Mascarenhaus, R.C.1993. Building an Enterprise Culture in the Public Sector: Reform of the Public Sector in Australia, Britain, and New Zealand. *Public Administration Review* 53(July-Aug.): 319-328.
- Masser,K.1998. Public Sector Administrative Reforms. In J. Shafritz, ed. *The International Encyclopedia of Public Policy and Administration*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.1851-1862.
- McDonald, O.1991. *The Future of Whitehall*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
- Mingle M., C. Paladin, and D.Hulme, eds.1998. *Beyond the New Public Management: Changing Ideas and Practices in Governance*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Edgar.
- Moon J. 1999. The Australian Public Sector and the New Governance. *Australian Journal of Public Administration* 58(2): 112-120.
- ODA.1993. *Taking Account of Good Government*. London; UK Overseas Development Administration.
- OECD.1995. *Governance in Transition: Public Management Reforms in OECD Countries*. Paris: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.
- Peters, B.G., and D.I.Savoie.1994. Civil Service Reform. *Public Administration Review* 54(Sept.-Oct.): 418-425.
- _____. 1996. Managing Incoherence: The Coordination and Empowerment Conundrum. *Public Administration Review* 56(May-June): 281-289.
- Peter,B.G., and V.Wright.1996. Public Policy and Administration, Old and New. In R.E.Goodin and H. - D. Klingmann, eds., *A New Handbook of Political Science*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 628-644.
- Pollitt, C., and H. Summa.1997. /Trajectories of Reform: Public Management Change in Four Countries. *Public Money and Management* 17(1): 7-18.
- Rhodes, R.A.W.1996. The New Governance: Governing without Government. *Political Studies* 44(4): 652-667.

- _____. 1997. *Understanding Governance: Policy Networks, Governance, Reflexivity and Accountability*. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.
- _____. 1998. Different Roads to Unfamiliar Places: UK Experience in Comparative Perspective. *Australian Journal of Public Administration* 57(4): 19–31.
- _____. 1999. Book Review: Jonathan Boston, John Martin, June Pallot and Pat Walsh, *Public Management: The New Zealand Model*. *Australian Journal of Public Administration* 58(3): 121–123.
- Roberts, A.1997. Performance-Based Organizations: Assessing the Gore Plan. *Public Administration Review* 57(6): 465–478.
- Royal Thai Government. 1998. Memorandum of Understanding between the Fiscal Policy Office of the Ministry of Finance of the Kingdom of Thailand and an Appraisal Mission of the Asian Development Bank on the Proposed Social Sector Program Loan: Discussion Draft. 16 January.
- Ruscio, K.P. 1997. Trust in the Administrative State. *Public Administration Review* 57(5): 454 –458.
- Saint Martin, D.1998. Management Consultants, the State, and the Politics of Administrative Reform in Britain and Canada. *Administration and Society* 30(5): 533–568.
- Schick, A.1998. Why Most Developing Countries Should Not Try New Zealand's Reforms. *The World Bank Research Observer* 13(1): 123–131.
- Thyme, I.1998. Integrative Governance: Challenges for the Senior Public Service. *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 64(3): 371–384.
- UNDP1995. *Public Sector Management, Governance, and Sustainable Human Development*. New York: United Nations Development Programme.

- _____. 1998. *Public Sector Management Reform in Asia and the Pacific: Selected Experiences from Seven Countries*. New York: Regional Governance Programmed for Asia-Pacific, United Nations Development Programme, October.
- World Bank. 1994. *Governance: The World Bank Experience*. Washington D.C: World Bank.
- _____. 1997. *World Development Report, 1997: The State in a Changing World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- _____. 1999. *Thailand Economic Monitor*, October. <http://www.worldbank.or.th/monitor>