

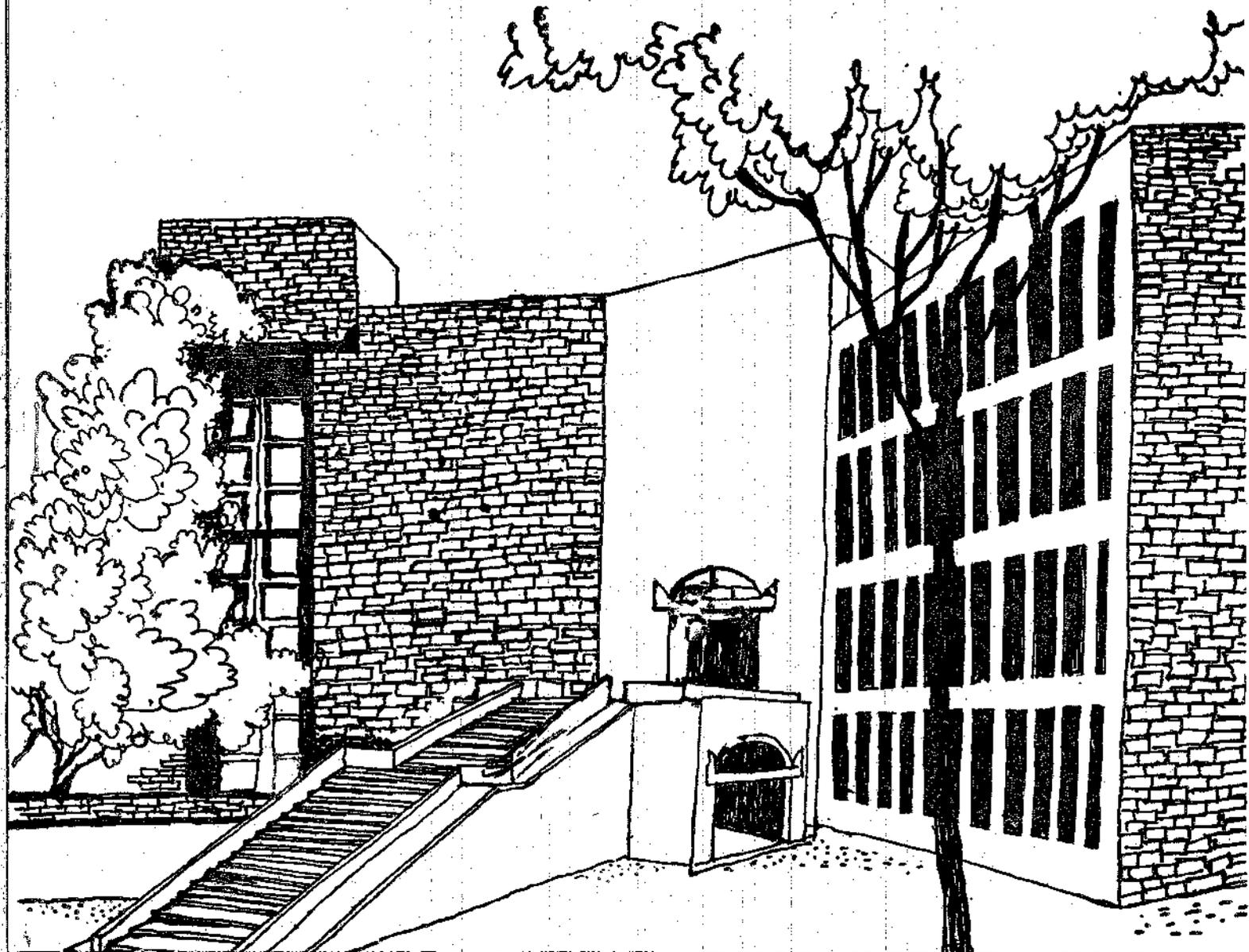


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# Working Paper

RESTRUCTURING PUBLIC SYSTEMS THROUGH  
ADMINISTRATIVE INNOVATIONS:  
WILL CIVIL SERVICE RESPOND?

By  
Anil K. Gupta



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# Restructuring Public Systems through Administrative Innovations: will civil service respond!

## Abstract

When the role of the state is being redefined in the wake of recent economic crisis, a discussion on making public systems and enterprises more responsive to social concerns may be quite appropriate. But that was not the only reason for taking upon this initiative of bringing out a special issue of Administrator} Journal of LBS Academy, Mussoorie) on innovations by administrators. I think like any other subsystem of society, bureaucracy is also ridden with conflicts. While majority may be averse to any change for the better, some do care { just like in any other system). I have no doubt that in any major restructuring in society, the role of even such *odd balls* may be marginal. But some of them can enlarge their role. Whether they will or not depends upon how crucial and powerful they consider their marginal position to be. Not all those who attempt change are marginalised. Some get Padam Shree{State honour) for their 'distinguished' service. What are the factors which lead state to incorporate certain type of changes and reject others is not too difficult to speculate.

I look into the factors which affect the transition of an idea into initiative, innovation and finally into institutionalization. Barriers to innovations have been looked at separately( Gupta, 1982) though briefly are reviewed here too. Not every innovation needs to be institutionalized in the structure of an organization. Some can get institutionalized into the person of the innovator. This is an insight which, perhaps, helps in taking us away from the common refrain in literature about perceived frustration of the researchers on the subject.

The paper is organised into 3 parts. In part one, I look into the possible reasons for administrators to take initiatives. In part two, I present an overview of some of the change experiences covered by the authors in the special volume of Administrator, as well as some other experiences not covered. Finally, I summarize a few lessons for further exploration.

# Restructuring Public Systems through Administrative Innovations: will civil service respond!<sup>1</sup>

## Context:

When the role of the state is being redefined in the wake of recent economic crisis, a discussion on making public systems and enterprises more responsive to social concerns may be quite appropriate. But that was not the only reason for taking upon this initiative of bringing out a special issue of Administrator on innovations by administrators.

When the idea was discussed with Shri. Yugandhar, Director of LBS Academy, almost a year ago, it was hoped that inventorizing the innovative experiments and experiences will help us appraise the emerging role of civil servants in society. I had expected a better response from the possible contributors, but that did not happen. Some of the colleagues whose experiences are worth recounting either did not find time to narrate the experience or preferred to remain silent. I will however, review some of these experiences in this introduction.

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I am grateful to Shri Yugandhar, Director, LBS Academy and Shri Sudhir Krishna for inviting me to guest edit a special volume of Administrator- the journal of LBS Academy, Mussoorie. The detailed papers by various authors whose experiences are very briefly reviewed in this note are available in the forthcoming issue of Administrator and also with me. I will appreciate reactions of the readers as also suggestions or leads about other innovations which need similar documentation.

Much of the writing of this note and the editing of various papers was done when I was visiting Centre For Development Research, Copenhagen in May, 1992. I must thank Dr. Janik Bosen and his other colleagues for excellent hospitality and Mary for help in the word processing of part of the manuscript.

Not all the experiences narrated in this paper are of equal intensity or imbued with similar originality of idea. If the readers are provoked into asking some question about the paucity of more fundamental innovations or the reasons for lack of continuity of some of the good initiatives, the purpose would have been served.

I look into the factors which affect the transition of an idea into initiative, innovation and finally into institutionalization. Barriers to innovations have been looked at separately (Gupta, 1982) though briefly are reviewed here too. Not every innovation needs to be institutionalized in the structure of an organization. Some can get institutionalized into the person of the innovator. This is an insight which, perhaps, helps in taking us away from the common refrain in literature about perceived frustration of the researchers on the subject. There are not many studies on administrative innovation, though there are plenty on administrative reforms ( see Butani, 1966; Bhuyan, 1979; Chagendhi, 1979; Bhargava and Torgal, 1981, for some of the early Indian studies and reviews on innovation). The ones that are there bemoan the fact that most innovations are not institutionalized. As if institutionalization of every innovation is a necessary precondition for an idea to be considered really worthwhile. I do, however, agree that many innovations do need to be institutionalized. Simply because that would improve the efficiency of the system a great deal and at a relatively speaking, very low cost. But learning lags in on-going bureaucratic organizations are a legend. The exceptions to these lags are the subject of this volume.

The paper is organised into 3 parts. In part one, I look into the possible reasons for administrators to take initiatives. In part two, I present an overview of some of the change experiences covered by the authors in this volume as well as some other not covered. Finally, I summarize some of the lessons for further exploration.

## Part One: Motivation for change:

Why should bureaucracy, entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining an order be expected to destroy it? The question, the way it is framed, can not be answered. Bureaucracy is not a monolith. It is not a community of interests having common goal and means. It is afflicted with contradictions, differences and diversity just as much as any other profession is. The difference is that people at large experience the negative consequence more often than perhaps the positive one. The alienation from public services is a reality. The declining profitability of public systems and huge losses are a legend. The indifferent attitude of the cutting edge of administration is taken for granted.

If all of this is true, is it also inevitable and therefore something to be lived with? Can all services improve if only these were privatized? Has entrepreneurship - so characteristic of some of the private sector - not been evidenced by some public administrators? Why is it that the saga of these entrepreneurs, change agents, 'developmental deviants' or just the person with an urge to prove different are not a subject of public debate and discussion?

The subject of administrative reforms has received considerable attention, but such reforms have meant procedural changes and to some extent "Bureaucratic re-orientation ." The reforms have generally been induced from outside. The idea of setting up Method Study Department was to look for opportunities for change from within but by a team of 'experts'. The ability of bureaucracy to generate changes of larger significance from within has not received adequate attention. The result has been lack of availability of organisational space for experimentation and local innovations.

The World Development Report C World Bank, 1983 :115 ) expressed their frustration in the following advice,"It is usually more fruitful to concentrate political and administrative efforts on radical changes in a few critical areas than to spread it ineffectually by attempt-

ing comprehensive reforms." There may be some truth in this statement. But there is no point in throwing the baby of partial reforms with the bath water of comprehensive reforms.

Conceptually, any innovation implies substantial improvement in the ways of doing things, producing goods or providing services. It may involve a new use of an existing resource or producing existing goods or services through new methods.

In the context of the ongoing economic crisis due to increasing budget deficits and declining productivity of the enterprises, the need for large scale urgent administrative reforms can not be questioned. However, given the fate of previous attempts aimed at such reforms, we can put our hopes in such reforms only at our peril. Would not then it be better if we could consider the possibility of building upon not just the hopes but concrete actions of some administrators who have made it happen.

The argument that these experiments are so sporadic and far fewer in nature that no viable strategy can be built upon these is valid. But only if one looks at these experiments as a source of recipes for reforms, if one looks at these experiments as sources of ideas, manifestation of an uneasiness about very low level of performance and as signs of stirrings about social accountability, then one can certainly learn from these efforts. In many cases these experiments merely illustrate the legendary 'resilience of bureaucracy to come back to its original form' notwithstanding the change. In a few cases however, the experiments also extend the boundaries of what is conventionally understood as possible with all the constraints of archaic rules and regulations as given.

The real challenge is to ensure that the performance standards which today are pegged at very low levels are raised substantially. This will require peer review processes to be

strengthened as well as client pressure to be increased. Both of these would require recognition of the potential which exists in the national institutions. The liberalization can also mean discounting indigenous knowledge system. The innovations like the ones described here, successful or otherwise, would then not become a point of reference and departure. That would indeed be a non-sustainable way of attempting reforms.

The purpose of this collection of papers is to trigger a debate about the potential for improving effectiveness and efficiency that exists within existing public systems. It is not to argue that these innovations can substitute for the larger institutional and social restructuring. But pending that, should one abandon the limited space these experiments are creating for individual creativity and innovation? Some might argue that these innovations might create false hopes of evolving an accountable state through piecemeal changes and reforms. I harbor no such illusions. I do believe however, that by restricting space for such creativity, we would certainly marginalise the voices for change. Any future movement for large scale restructuring of the social ethos will have to ally with such forces of change within bureaucracy and other social systems ( Gupta, 1981).

This issue of Administrator puts together such experiences which should, hopefully, provoke others to articulate their own adventures. It does not matter whether all journeys described here ended at the desired goal and in good time. But every journey which opened a new path is worthy of notice. A peer culture which recognizes these change-makers would also by definition, cast reflection on change-breakers. The conflicts among doers and non-doers must be intensified. The network of internal change agents might provide impetus for the change-stoppers or -breakers to devise new strategies for slowing down the engine of change. But is that a good enough reason for opening the subject for debate!

In a recent issue of the journal *Administration and Society* (Vol. 23,2, 1991), a discussion on 'The Public Administrator as Hero' has been initiated by Bellavita (1991). The idea that change-makers are hero-like persons, with extraordinary commitment to duty, keen eye for an opportunity and a desire to accomplish something great has been critiqued by Terry (1991), who felt that the model of public entrepreneur was a more appropriate one. The argument has been that the metaphor of hero was too strong and implied a larger than life image for the change makers. Many of the administrators who have tried various changes may themselves not ascribe such a role for themselves. Both the authors agree that there was a need for looking at the 'unsung heroes' of public services whose actions often prove to be the exception to the rule of inertia, indifference and insignificance characterizing the public services and sector. None of the descriptions in this volume match the image attributed by Bellavita to his models of change makers. The change makers in this volume do not claim to have undergone any ordeal. They also did not claim to have done any great service to humanity or society. They tried to improve the functioning of the system they were incharge of and in doing this, tried to be creative.

However, the question that is rightly asked is, why do a few public servants become impatient with the things as they are. And if they do, does it have any implication for those who don't. Or, are the change-makers and change-breakers different kinds of people?

To what extent are the changes triggered by a larger social concern, individual urge or uneasiness, pursuit of excellence or relevance or both, or all of these in different combinations? Why is it that changes in some of the basic property relations are not so easy to come about? Are certain kinds of organizational situations or problem categories more amenable to change through administrative initiatives?

There are no simple answers to these questions. I don't believe that all or even most change-makers are extraordinary people in so far as their personality profile is concerned. However, those who bring about changes of significant proportion in whichever role/job they are put in, are certainly very different kinds of people. Their being administrators is just incidental. In any role, they would have tried to bring about changes.

I also do not think that most of these change-makers need publicity for themselves or their colleagues. The ones who do, have to be watched with care. They can certainly assume a larger sense of self-importance than may be right, and thus may not hesitate in cutting corners. This review is not about such people, though a reference will indeed be made to them. But I will like readers to clearly distinguish among both types of change-makers. One has to appreciate that motivations are not always easy to infer from the kind of change attempted by a person. However, one can infer more accurately the motivation by looking at the way the credit for the changes (if successful) is taken. We have come across more examples of confident innovators who were never shy of acknowledging the contribution of their subordinates than otherwise. There were many who even did not see anything extraordinary in their efforts. It is these innovators to whom the future of creative and accountable state services belongs.

## **Part Two: Seeds of Innovation:**

The seed of an idea for change can emerge from most extraordinary sources. The creativity of the person sometimes lies in connecting the unconnectables i.e. finding solutions amidst opportunities which confront most other people in the similar situation but are missed. I do not want to give an impression that innovators look for an opportunity which others did not have. On the contrary, they think so intensely about a problem that search for solutions leads them to one or the other constraint transforming itself in to an opportunity. One should also not believe that only the gifted ones can be innovative. I may even suggest

that every one at some or the stage has to be really creative and innovative just in order to survive. But some do make a conscious effort to discover creative solutions to the problems and often through triggering the imagination of their colleagues.

### *Kya Cheese hai!*

Daijeet Aurora was Managing Director of Andhra Pradesh Dairy corporation way back in early eighties. He was struggling with a problem of low productive animals in dry regions, high cost of collecting milk and thereby high incidence of losses. He had earlier worked as collector in a drought prone region and also as Director, Drought Prone Area programme in the central government. He knew that a large number of people survived by earning their livelihoods through livestock management. The regions which the national programme had identified as having dairy potential were totally different ones. These were the well endowed regions where dairy animals were managed intensively and as a secondary means of occupation. But this way the dairy programme was going to bypass totally the people who depended on livestock as a primary means of survival in some of the most poorer dry regions of the state. He discovered that one way out of the problem would be to add value to the high cost milk collected in the dry regions. He also realized that the best cheese in the world was made out of cows' milk. All the milk in that region (Chittoor District) was cow's milk. He located an experienced cheese maker, got him going with the challenge and succeeded in launching a new product thanks to the hard work by the technical persons and the team involved in the process. In fact the ad lines of 'Asli Cheese hai 'and' Kya Cheese hai' did the remaining trick. The cheese so made was selling right opposite Amul Factory in Anand- the Mecca of processed milk products in India.

### *One man's pollutant another person's resource*

Vittal was Managing Director of the Gujarat Narmada Fertilizer Corporation and faced a serious problem of disposing fly ash a waste which was causing pollution in the neighbourhood. He heard from a friend in Electricity corporation who was also facing the similar problem that it could perhaps be tried for reclaiming eroded land. As he put it very graphically, "if one man's poison can be another person's meat, could not one person pollutant become another's raw material?". And he proved that it could.

Vittal's paper in fact carries many examples of similar transformation of crisis into opportunities all along his career. What he demonstrates quite unambiguously is that there exists potential of improvement in almost any enterprise. And this potential can be tapped by building upon the knowledge and perceptions of the existing professionals in any given organization. He has used a simple questionnaire approach to elicit the ideas of improvement. During personal discussions he narrated an interesting way in which unexpected rewards can follow through such an empirical approach of learning. When he sent the questionnaire to hundreds of his colleagues in Electronics Department, he came across a person who knew Japanese language and had never been able to combine his technical and linguistic abilities for exploring opportunities for closer collaboration with Japan. Such instances can be multiplied.

### *Building upon redundant resources*

Inderjit Khanna was Collector in a district of Rajasthan. The dairy development programme was just picking up at that time in late mid seventies. He faced a problem of storing milk without the chilling centres. He found that several cold storages existed in the district which had space for storing milk cans if need be there. The problem got solved at very low cost and improved productivity of both the resources.

### *Networking for Inter-sectoral linkages*

C S Kedar was the Director of Dry Land Development Board ( DLDB) in Karnataka. He tried a model of organizational design which involved several innovations at one go. The heads of four divisional offices of DLDB reported to divisional commissioner for administrative purposes but reported to him for technical and coordination purposes. The resources were transferred through Divisional Commissioner and yet the entire team of technical and other staff respected his leadership and tried to achieve wonderful results. He derived his moral authority through his ability to link the problems in various sections of DLDB with potential solutions even if it meant crossing the wires. He played the role of networker rather than the administrative head. The quality of team building process was such that a soil conservation officer took pride in talking about the achievements of forester and forester would take pride in saying the work of agronomist. The conventional sectoral loyalties were dissolved and truly interdisciplinary spirit created in great measure. There were several areas of conceptual inadequacy which his successor Dr. Subramanian tried to overcome in an equally creative manner. Instead of taking a macro catchment treatment approach, they started micro catchment planning together with creation of farmers' sanghas or groups to manage sundry expenses but for common good. There were limitations in building people's institutions to take over responsibility of watershed structures and other needs once the project team withdrew. But even here, the experience seems to have much better than many other similar projects. Many innovative ideas were tried by the staff at different levels such as generating lacs of mango grafts, using fruit trees in catchment area planning, converting gulleys into water storing structures, using seed testing facilities of the pathology lab of a university department to produce high quality seed of rainfed crops at prices less than state agro-industries corporation etc. The fact that so many people at different levels took initiative to reduce costs and improve efficiency is a tribute to the quality of leadership and congenial environment. Some people did misutilize the privilege but the proportion of such people was far lesser than that of who did not. The project became one of the best pieces of achievement in public sector without incidentally in-

volvement of NGOs or foreign consultants. Of course once the success was achieved, as Vittal says, it had many fathers. World Bank also claimed credit for things which in fact were never anticipated or planned in its project document. Some others of course tried to bring in various other inadequacies which afflict other public systems. Yet, a point had been made.

#### *Intrapreneurship at microlevel: Bhagirathi*

M L Mehta was secretary planning and Development Commissioner in Rajasthan. He had keen desire to develop administrative innovations by which the cutting edge of bureaucracy can become more people oriented. He developed a scheme called Bhagirathi. The idea was that just the way mythical character Bhagirath had brought Ganga river on the earth single handedly, could not there be found similar developmental entrepreneurs in the bureaucracy

Would not they similarly try to achieve the impossible targets of social development? He asked the lowest level of staff in Agricultural and some other departments to volunteer for becoming Bhagirath. Such volunteers would set their own targets of achievement which should be double or more of what was being done in past. The only reward that would follow is that Mehta would pay personal attention to every volunteer and listen and appreciate their efforts. No other compensation was to follow. Apparently excellent results were obtained. Such experiments show the extent to which indigenously conceived ideas and management approaches can help turn around administrative systems and improve client satisfaction. The concept of 'developmental Volunteers' still remains to be fully exploited. Gupta (1992) has argued that there exists in every field of public service, a large number of professionals who can not find fulfillment of their life purpose in the given roles and responsibilities. To them the opportunity to face new challenges serves as the incentive. The regret is that even that can not be provided to most in the present dispensation.

### *Improving productivity through group motivation*

Cowlagi faced a very serious challenge in late seventies in the field of industrial training in Gujarat. The unemployment problem was increasing, the demand of trained manpower was at the same time was also increasing but supply was not, and there was a political realization that some thing had to be done rather urgently. He realized that various industrial training institutes in the state were running only one shift. The technical trainers in these institutes were quite demoralized because of very limited opportunities for vertical growth and various other administrative irritants. He consulted the colleagues and together with them worked out a scheme for tripling the output with the same infrastructure by running three shifts of training in the ITIs. There would be fewer better examples of improving productivity three times in the public systems. Simultaneously to meet the need of tribal students, mini ITIs were set up with limited opportunities but opportunities still.

### *Designing Accessible administrative system: why do only some changes get replicated!*

Lakhina was a Collector of a drought prone district in Maharashtra. While the problem of more effective employment generation, or drought proofing, or handling grievances could not be taken up for any major experimentation, a very interesting administrative experiment was tried. It was in fact an idea to scale up a silent experiment tried by V P Raja in Satara district. Raja was quite concerned that people who came to collectorate found the entire system both visually and in practice quite oppressive. The Jay out was chaotic, old papers were littered all over, working environment was quite dull and pressing, the contact between officers and the people was minimal, corruption was rampant and accountability towards people was weak. He looked at an old manual developed by Anderson in 1928 about the schedule of disposal of papers in the collectorate. For instance Anderson had clearly outlined the life of various categories of documents after which they should be destroyed. If that was not done, the chaos and pile of unnecessary paper was inevitable. Lakhina sent his staff to Satara to study the innovation, added several suggestions of his

own as well as encouraged his staff to think of alternative ways of improving the functioning of administrative system at least internally. The whole experiment attracted lot of attention. The chief secretary of Maharashtra wanted to 'straight jacket' the idea so that it could be implemented in all the districts. The routine became a matter of celebration. Even the then prime minister complimented the effort and claimed quite inappropriately that this experiment would bring about any substantial improvement in the day to day interface common people had with district administration. Much has been written about the experiment. But what is important is to note that certain changes in the administration which did not disturb power structures and in fact made the transactions smoother, were likely to find easier and wider acceptance than some other changes which disturbed the power structure. The fact the scope existed for improving systems even without disturbing power structure still remains.

#### *Pollution Control: mobilising political will*

Raja tried another even more innovative experiment when he was Transport Commissioner in Bombay. He found that in most developed countries the owners of the vehicles were responsible for keeping their vehicles in the condition that these caused minimum pollution. Auto emission check and control made the task of urban environmental management manageable. He studied the legal system and acts of different countries and proposed to the political leadership that a similar law be enacted in Maharashtra legislative assembly. Despite tremendous opposition by the automobile industry who were expected to make some changes in their designs, petrol pumps which were supposed to provide the facility for checking and others, the act was passed and Bombay became the first city in India to control through have such a law. It was enforced rather strictly in the beginning but as is expected in the corridors of power, the person was transferred, the system became lax and the things returned to lower level of performance and efficiency.

#### *Learning from the rule breakers*

Kamal Taori while looking after Transport and Khadi Village Industries Department introduced several innovations which became part of national policies. In transport department there were several issues faced such as: the rampant corruption; inability to discriminate between a frequent visitor and occasional visitor; small user and large user or tax payer and frequent collection of small amounts or one time collection of reasonable tax and thus reduce paper work without decreasing the revenue too much, etc. Building upon the knowledge of touts who abounded in the system, local staff and some of the users, he devised a system of paying tax for several years at a time. A simple insight that 90% of the taxes were recovered from heavy vehicles whereas 90% of the work involved light vehicle owners, helped in transforming the work. In Khadi and Village industries he recognized the need for networking among the small cottage industry entrepreneurs particularly in the hand made paper sector. The idea was to identify technological, marketing, design and other constraints so that a unified strategy could be developed without having to depend upon the subsidies a great deal. He committed some mistakes in the process such as designing products without having done enough market research. But eventually some very innovative product profiles were developed.

#### *Learning From the Failure*

Chandan provides an interesting experience of a young officer who has tried to overcome resistance to change in the implementation of an ongoing scheme. The case also brings out certain dimensions of change rather than innovation which require reflection. For instance, should an amateur experiment in changing the design of the hut in this case be considered legitimate effort to improve effectiveness when the technical competence in the matter exists elsewhere. It is possible that the technical experts may be too conservative and confident of their design, as it did become apparent in this case also. However, the way to overcome that could have been to identify alternative sources of knowledge and

expertise including that of people. In a way, the lessons which author draws from the experiments can be amplified and some of them can be reinterpreted. Some of the lessons should have formed the part of compulsory repertoire of every officer. The fact that need for close involvement of affected people and the technical experts, peoples' representative has still to be realized only emphasizes the long way one has to go in modifying the training curriculum of IAS Probationers. Notwithstanding these limitations, author has to be complimented for persisting with an urge to improve and economize, so necessary at the current juncture of Indian economy. It is true that among various responsibilities that an officer has to handle not every activity can receive a fair amount of attention. At the same time, it is also necessary that prioritization of those programmes and activities which concern the most poor people takes place { see Gupta and Shroff, 1990 for illustration of the way perception of poverty in a participative manner could transform the self image and role and priorities of local level bureaucracy). But then, aren't we asking too much from a system which is designed in general to maintain the status quo to innovate and improvise in the interest of the poor ?. The question is how can more and more officers recognize limits of their own professional knowledge and build upon available expertise at different levels and in different sub systems of society to bring about a lasting change in the lives of common people.

*Never Own Other's Dreams: lest success is institutionalized!*

Sirohi, Choubey and Saxena provide another example of a substantial change which could not be institutionalized for well known reasons of transfer in the bureaucracy and inability of the successor to take pride in the innovations triggered by one's predecessor. In fact, the detailed description of computerization in such a deeply entrenched department like finance only proves that changes are possible. There is no doubt that accountability of bureaucracy would not increase substantially if transparency in the accounting system is not achieved as attempted by the authors. At the same time, a finding of an earlier action

research experience we had may be relevant here. To institutionalize any small change in one system requires several simultaneous changes in other sub systems at different levels (Mathur and Gupta, 1984). We had also noted an extraordinary resilience on the part of bureaucracy to come back to its original form after a while. Thus, while changes are important, equally important is the need to understand the dynamics and processes of institutionalization. It is admirable that authors could achieve consensus among so many interest groups within and outside bureaucracy to achieve a significant result from the expertise generated from within. It is expected that once a system of accountability becomes stronger through computerization, the kind of leakages that take places in the public system may become more difficult if not impossible.

A very useful insight authors provide is about the need to involve the implementing officials directly in the running of the systems. I fully agree with the contention of the authors that separation of data entry and management from the implementing system is a sure way of killing the spirit of reform. Many organizations where some of the experts have introduced such a dichotomy in the financial managements information system (FMIS), have had disastrous results.

Authors have rightly anticipated several possible reasons for lack of institutionalization of change. For instance, a systematic documentation of the possible follow up action and the likely problems was not left behind. Similarly, little more time and energy was needed to be spent with the users organizations to generate service orientation. I doubt whether involvement of an outside agency could have altered the consequences much. On the contrary, it could have generated greater resistance for change. The whole experience is very instructive and in the current context of economic restructuring going on in the country provides early warning of the likely inertia to be faced in bringing about even small

changes in the on going administrative system.

Shah describes the experience of Gujarat Government with introduction of a management technique viz. Management Bio Objectives (MBO) in different organizations and departments of the government. While introducing this technique many assumptions were made about the likely improvement in the working solely on account of the introduction of this method. It was also hoped that the changes introduced would be institutionalized and would withstand the transfer of key actors. Many of these assumptions did not prove to be justified. At the same time, the case does illustrate the need for clarifying the objectives of the organization at different level in the government together with the identification of critical result areas. To what extent a reform which does not build upon direct accountability towards clients and particularly to the disadvantaged section of the society would be sustainable is an issue that is referred only in the passing.

On the whole, various experiences of change innovative or otherwise provide a better, understanding of why substantial improvement in the structure of governance in our society is not taking place. The very fact that initiatives for change have been taken by so many underline the importance of exploring ways of increasing the proportion of such change makers. It is also instructive to note that political interference, blamed so often for the poor performance of administrative system was not the major stumbling block in practically any of the change introduced. The administrative politics did manifest in almost all the cases and therefore perhaps needs to be given more attention in future.

For every one innovative practice described here, there may be thousand or even more which remain undocumented. The purpose of this narrative is to draw attention to this gap. It is hoped that this gap would soon be filled up by more provocative perspectives on the subjects.

Some of the perspectives which have emerged from the brief review above are:

1. The innovations may some times be products of serendipity but often is not. The perception of creative opportunities does call for mental preparedness for connecting the unknown but expected nodes of information. Thus a chance remark by a friend or a colleague triggers a spark in the mind but largely because it had been anticipated.
2. The conversion of a stress or constraint into opportunity is enabled by a relentless pursuit of solution to a problem. It requires very high degree of concentration and an ability to build collegial teams. Because the numerous links in the chain of solution are built bit by bit by the ideas contributed by many actors.
3. It is crucial though less apparent from the review that in many cases the costly mistakes were avoided by the timely forewarning by the colleagues. Why would they do it? Apparently the innovative transformation becomes an collective enterprise. Sometimes, it is just because of the awe in which a senior officer is held by the subordinates. But it is unlikely that many suggestions would come if people were not sure of the intentions of the change maker. There are instances when the boss took the entire credit even when the crucial ideas were contributed by the

lower level functionaries. But such incidents are far fewer and are often referred as something that people despise.

4. Not taking things for granted has helped in almost in all the cases. Asking questions even if answers seemed very obvious appeared to characterize many of the change makers.

5. Maintaining curiosity and admitting ignorance seemed to generate tremendous collegiality. Confusing status or authority with an impossible role of 'know-all' seems a frequently found malady among the service officers. The inverse relationship between status and skills( of at least certain kinds) is almost always discounted. The change makers seemed far more conscious of these limitations and thus obtained often very good results.

6. One of the reasons for lack of continuity of an innovation could be inability of people at large to own the idea. Those officers who shared credit liberally and in fact minimized their role in the success, found greater probability of changes continuing. But the urge among many successors to be 'Columbus' did affect many of the good changes also adversely.

7. Vittal provides a very interesting insight that just the way, one man's meat is another man's poison, one industry's pollutant can be another industry's raw material. Even if this is not true in several cases, the idea indicates sensitivity to the concept of recycling. The terrible waste that takes place in majority of public and even many private organizations, can thus be checked by taking such a constructive

approach. The environmental movement also needs to generate such constructive opportunities besides complimenting efforts aimed at such initiatives.

8. Taking an empirical approach to learning, by sending a questionnaire to the employees in a department and/or its clients to ascertain their views about various problems and generating need for new ideas and approaches seemed a simple idea with tremendous potential. But I must hasten to add that the reason for lack of innovative attitude among public officials is not always the lack of ideas or information. It is the very culture which breeds mediocrity and generates a peer pressure for taking the line of least resistance that needs overhaul. Once more evidence of positive initiatives becomes available, perhaps such a cultural revolution may in fact be triggered. This approach has several other advantages. The top leadership can give a very different kind of signal through this process. Suppose some of the best observations are made by staff either working at very junior level of staff or in far off places. The chief executive can, by paying attention to such ideas, convey where his or her priorities lay. The meritocracy can take over from the mediocrity.

9. Politicians may not be a problem by definition if their creative role is underlined and exploited in the interest of the project and the society. This might appear strange to many of us who are fed every day by the media and the grapevine of the umpteen cases where irresponsible politicians cause tremendous loss to society to fulfill their personal agendas. However, in the cases described, the lesson drawn here indeed applies.

10. The strategic networking is crucial for the success of any new enterprise. Success in one field could inspire confidence among the possible collaborators in a totally different field if the conceptual commonality (for instance quality conscious-

ness or better industrial relations) could be shown. In the case of GNFC getting into scooter project, such a strategy seemed to work very well. Likewise building upon existing networks (for instance of dealers) even if for totally different products or services can reduce risks and expand opportunities.

11. While building upon existing networks, spatial patterns of demand can play big role if proper linkages can be built up. For instance the demand for scooters and fertilizers may be independent in terms of consumers, marketing strategy or retail outlets. However, the fact that in the regions of high fertilizer demand, the irrigation as well as other infrastructure is likely to be better and therefore the demand for scooters, is an idea likely to be missed in the normal course. This was against the text book approach but it worked.

12. A sick industry or department is not necessarily devoid of talented people at different levels. Thus one ought to identify such people and empower them to strengthen the turn around of the enterprise or scheme. The case of scooters project as well as trebling of the capacity of ITIs in Gujarat illustrated this point.

13. Vittal recalls that Michelangelo always used to seek statue in a stone. He observed once that when he chiseled a statue from a piece of marble, he went on removing whatever was not the part of the statue: what was finally left was the statue. The turn around of a sick enterprise or activity could be a process like Michelangelo's.

The readers would draw many more lessons and not necessarily always in line with my

own. As long as I can convey the need for looking more actively for such instances, my purpose would be served. I think we have been obsessed far long with the failures that we have lost the urge to anticipate success. The change makers seem to be making just this point in this issue of Administrator.

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