



ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS - AS A FACTOR OF MODERNIZATION

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Abstract: The article analyzes the processes of modernizing and decentralizing government administration bodies in the Republic of Uzbekistan. These processes are rooted in the state governance model proposed by President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, which aims to bring public services closer to the people and focuses on the development of civil society and democratic values. The importance of administrative reforms in Uzbekistan and the factors driving them are examined in detail. Additionally, the experience of decentralization in Western countries is studied through a comparative approach. The article explores the political, administrative, and fiscal forms of decentralization and their significance in Uzbekistan's administrative reforms.

Keywords: Uzbekistan, administrative reforms, public administration, decentralization, public service, civil society, democratic reforms, public oversight, governance efficiency.

INTRODUCTION

In the current period, the processes of modernizing government authorities in the country have accelerated. Reforms aimed at democratizing all aspects of social life are increasingly penetrating every sphere of life. The ultimate goal of these reforms is to build a civil society and a rule-of-law state in the country. The essence of these reforms lies in ensuring that the idea proposed by President Shavkat Mirziyoyev—*“The people should not serve the government bodies; rather, government bodies should serve our people”*—becomes the main principle of state governance.

The *Strategy of Actions* on the five priority areas of development of the Republic of Uzbekistan includes tasks such as: deepening democratic reforms aimed at improving state and society-building; strengthening the role of the parliament and political parties in modernizing the country; reforming the public administration system; developing the organizational and legal foundations of public service; enhancing the “e-government” system; improving the quality and efficiency of public services; implementing mechanisms for public oversight; and strengthening the role of civil society institutions and the mass media.

The primary objectives of these tasks are to democratize the methods and essence of government administration in line with the requirements of civil society, direct the key priorities of state policy towards improving the well-being of the people, and elevate the country’s socio-economic potential to a higher level.

RESEARCH METHODS



Analytical Method – The article analyzes the processes of administrative reforms in the Republic of Uzbekistan and their key elements.

Comparative Analysis Method – The administrative reforms and decentralization experiences of Western countries are studied in comparison with the reforms in Uzbekistan.

Historical Method – The historical development of decentralization in public administration and its practical outcomes in various countries are examined.

Logical-Structural Method – The stages and objectives of the reform processes are analyzed structurally, and their socio-economic impacts are studied.

The use of these methods helps to form a logical system of information in the article and substantiate the relevance of administrative reforms in Uzbekistan.

RESEARCH RESULTS

On September 8, 2017, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan issued the Decree “On Approving the Concept of Administrative Reforms in the Republic of Uzbekistan.” This decree was aimed at implementing a fundamental transformation in the modernization of government bodies in the country. The decree emphasized the need for a completely new, efficient, and high-quality system of public administration as envisioned in the *Strategy of Actions* and outlined the decentralization of both state administrative bodies and local executive authorities (Decree No. PF-5185, 2017).

The directions of administrative reforms (the term "administrative" derives from the Latin word "administratio," meaning management or governance) in Western countries are associated with the decentralization of state and local government authorities. The foundation of decentralization reforms, which form the core of administrative reforms, was first laid in France in 1982. Soon after, similar reforms began in the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Australia, New Zealand, Sweden, and other Western countries. Within a short period, the ideas of decentralization spread to most countries worldwide, producing positive results in a relatively short time.

By the 1980s, reforms in public administration had become a pressing issue for many countries. These reforms aimed to reevaluate the role of state and government bodies in society and bring them closer to citizens. In many countries, people began to demand reduced tax burdens and improved quality of administrative services. As a result, governments worldwide sought solutions to common issues: improving the quality and increasing the quantity of administrative services without increasing government funding—and in some cases, even reducing it.

From the late 19th century, the ministry-based administrative systems in Western countries were perceived as increasingly limited in addressing economic and social issues. In the United States, independent agencies were established to assist ministries with functional decentralization (e.g., the Federal Trade Commission). In the United Kingdom, social corporations were formed, while France established social agencies. These decentralized entities, endowed with extensive management powers, began fulfilling administrative law functions. Additionally, they took on specific commercial and economic activities, often functioning as private law entities. Due to their flexibility in choosing work methods and structures, they quickly adapted to the principles of market economies, increasing their management efficiency.



In most countries, ministries were no longer seen as sector-specific administrative bodies but as entities operating based on expediency principles. Their primary function shifted from leadership to strategic management—focused on coordination and control.

The essence of Western administrative reforms lay in fundamentally transforming the culture and philosophy of governance to align with modern cultural and business principles. Unlike traditional bureaucratic governance, the reformed systems emphasized entrepreneurial spirit, proactivity, and customer care in public administration.

Renowned Western scholar Robert Ebel articulated the importance of decentralization as follows:

- “In the Western world, decentralization is seen as a cost-effective alternative for providing public services. In developing countries, it is implemented to improve economic efficiency and governance. Former Soviet states view it as a natural step towards market economies and democracy. Latin America approaches decentralization as a tool for democratization, while Africa sees it as a path toward national unity.”

According to the experiences of developed countries, decentralization involves transferring the responsibilities of planning, management, and resource utilization from central governments to lower levels of administration. Decentralization is closely linked to the concept of subsidiarity (from the Latin *subsidiarius*, meaning auxiliary or supportive), which involves delegating functions or responsibilities to the lowest possible levels of governance.

The “Concept of Administrative Reforms in the Republic of Uzbekistan” was adopted to address the challenges and shortcomings accumulated in the current public and local government administration systems. The decree not only outlined the tasks for implementing administrative reforms but also analyzed the remnants of outdated management practices that hinder modernization. It provided a detailed examination of how these traditional methods obstruct efforts to modernize governance.

The concept aims to create a new public administration system capable of fully implementing reforms, legal acts, and state programs, as well as effectively identifying and addressing socio-political and socio-economic development issues in a timely manner. Its primary goal is to develop a fundamentally new conceptual model of public administration.

The concept’s reforms extend beyond democratizing public administration to initiating changes across all areas of society. These include fostering socio-political, legal, and economic practices characteristic of civil society and achieving the strategic goal of building a modern, developed state embodying the full qualities of advanced nations.

Due to the limited scope of the article, only the fourth direction of the concept—“Improving mechanisms for vertical management systems and cooperation between executive authorities”—is explored in depth. This area emphasizes decentralization, a key aspect of administrative reforms, which involves transferring the responsibilities of state administrative bodies. Decentralization, inherently linked to subsidiarity, delegates functions or responsibilities to the lowest levels of social governance to ensure efficiency and responsiveness.

RESEARCH DISCUSSION

There are three types of decentralization—political, administrative, and fiscal—with forms such as devolution, delegation, and deconcentration. **Political decentralization** refers to transferring political power to regional government bodies, ranging from citizens' assemblies to local government institutions. **Devolution** (from the English term "devolution," meaning the transfer of



power or responsibility) involves granting local authorities autonomy by delegating management responsibilities, authority, revenue resources, and their means to ensure independence.

Administrative decentralization means transferring decision-making regarding the coordination and management of various social services, as well as their resources and responsibilities, to lower levels of government and self-governing bodies. **Deconcentration** refers to the transfer of some central government powers and responsibilities to local government bodies while maintaining hierarchical subordination. Deconcentration is considered the first step toward decentralization.

Delegation of authority involves redistributing authority and responsibilities from central government bodies to local management bodies, which may not always be subordinate divisions of the central government. Although responsibilities are transferred to local management bodies, vertical subordination remains intact. **Fiscal decentralization** (from the Latin *fiscalis*, meaning related to the state, treasury, or taxes) is a more complete and transparent form of decentralization, directly associated with budgetary practices. It also includes the redistribution of resources from the center to regions.

In modern times, regardless of whether reforms are implemented in administration, budget, or public management, they aim to achieve the following universal objectives: improving the quality of public services; enhancing the efficiency of public expenditures; and improving the performance and quality of executive power and all its bodies at different levels.

In countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and Germany, reforms are being implemented based on concepts for assessing the results of public executive power management. Such new approaches have spread to many other countries. Consequently, it has become a pressing issue for governments to actively collaborate with citizens to improve the quality of public services. Governments continuously monitor public opinion to determine what citizens expect from public services. For example, municipal bodies in the United Kingdom regularly conduct surveys among the population to evaluate the quality of public services, their tax burden, and whether they align with public expectations.

One of the tasks in implementing such reforms was to develop systems of regulations for working with citizens. In the UK, this system was called "standards for working with citizens," which established specific benchmarks for public servants when interacting with the population. In France, since 2000, guidelines and obligations for building relationships with citizens have been included in the "Law on the Coordination of Public Services" for each public institution. Furthermore, the government adopted decisions to "simplify many types of public services" and introduced new payment rules for the population.

In European countries, specialized services were established to provide quality public services to the population. For job seekers, a personal case manager was assigned. This manager not only provided information on employment-related government services but also gathered information on all related public services. Another direction in developed countries was to increase the transparency and speed of public services provided to the population. These tasks were assigned to departments of transport, regional governments, and municipalities. They annually develop and publish indices of the most efficient and high-quality practices on their official websites.

Since 2000, most Western countries have established rules requiring every ministry to develop and approve a plan to evaluate the quality of its services. In European countries, significant attention was paid to forming an open management system as one of the main directions of administrative reforms. For this purpose, administrative activities and judicial proceedings were significantly improved.



For example, in the UK over the past decade, attention has been focused on solving the following issues in the management system:

- Government administration lagging far behind private sector management, particularly corporate governance, in terms of quality indicators;
- Increasing costs of implementing state management functions in an environment where management and information technologies are constantly evolving;
- Existence of unnecessary positions in the state apparatus system, lack of responsibility among civil servants, and their insufficient dedication to their duties;
- Growing need for an economical and efficient government, coupled with the inadequacy of existing management resources to meet contemporary demands, leading to the necessity of reforming management performance evaluation systems.

As a result of reforms aimed at addressing these issues, the foundations of civil society were further strengthened in the UK, and mechanisms ensuring societal stability were formed. Public welfare also saw significant improvements.

In Uzbekistan, the Concept of Administrative Reforms outlines the following tasks in the field of decentralization of state authority: step-by-step decentralization of state governance by transferring the powers of state administration bodies to local state authorities and, within regions, to district (city) state authorities; ensuring the practical implementation of the principle of separation of powers in the organization of local state governance; introducing a system for electing governors aimed at ensuring effective public oversight of their activities; and increasing the role and efficiency of citizens' self-governance bodies in solving urgent socio-economic development issues (Presidential Decree No. PF-5185, 2017).

It is evident that one of the objectives of implementing administrative reforms in the country is to form civil society and a rule-of-law state based on decentralization. Civil society can only develop under conditions where there is both horizontal and vertical separation of powers, meaning the existence of elected government bodies. In a civil society where the interests of the state, society, and individuals are harmonized, citizens develop a tendency to form social organizations based on their rights and interests, enabling them to participate in and oversee government bodies.

In a civil society, the transfer of central government powers to local government bodies and civil society institutions leads to an increasing need for citizens, especially young people, to personally participate in management. Such cooperation between citizens and the state fosters consensus and societal stability.

Another important aspect of administrative reforms is that they limit the governance activities of state bodies, creating opportunities for citizens to strengthen their self-governance tendencies. The significance of this lies in the fact that conditions enabling individuals to realize their potential encourage greater freedom and initiative. Since economic growth is inherently tied to individual freedom, the economic strength of a country is bound to increase as a result of administrative reforms. Most importantly, as individuals gain the ability to freely express their desires and interests, they naturally develop aspirations toward prosperity.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the administrative reforms implemented in Uzbekistan, based on the integration of foreign and national experiences, have led to the following changes in the state governance system at its current stage:



- The structure and role of executive bodies within the state governance system have evolved progressively, with increased adherence to the principles of decentralization within this system.
- The principle of separation of powers was established in the local government system, resulting in increased efficiency in local governance.
- A new democratic model of governance—public service delivery—has emerged and developed within the state governance system. This has democratized the nature and essence of state administration.
- As a result of administrative reforms, the independence and activity of non-governmental non-profit organizations have increased. These organizations began to actively participate in state governance activities and the decision-making processes for political matters. With reduced interference from executive authorities, civil society began to develop in the country. Ultimately, this created broader opportunities for ensuring citizens' rights and freedoms.

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