

A Critique of Administrative Reform Programs in Egypt Implications from Riggs' Prismatic Model

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Abstract

Egypt underwent many and continuous attempts to reform its administrative system since the fifties of the last century when it sought to adopt the recommendations mentioned in the American Expert Paul Sinkler's Report which embraced legislative and reorganizing tools to reform the bureaucratic system then (Kassem et al, 1996:18). This paper is a trial to investigate how far Fred Riggs Model- that have been widely used to explain the development of communities- could be used to explain and evaluate the endeavors to reform the government and related public sector in the case of Egypt; i.e., calling attention to the importance of Riggs Model implications in the field of administrative reform. F. Riggs Model –known as the Prismatic Society Model- provides ideas and dimensions for classifying developed and developing communities. The study aims at utilizing these dimensions to judge the maturity of the administrative reforms endeavors that took place during two decades (1990-2010). The main finding of the study is that the reform programs adopted during this period were supposed to be promising; nonetheless, the lack of integration amongst them was the main reason behind the persistent failure witnessed in the Egyptian administrative system till now.

Keywords: Administrative Reform, F. Riggs Model, Reform Programs, Egypt.

1. Introduction

There have been many early attempts to reform the bureaucratic system in Egypt; nonetheless it could be claimed that the problems prevailed in the fifties of the last century are the same that prevail nowadays but on a larger scale. This could be evidenced in Monte Palmer and Others' Report (1988: 33-44), as their empirical study of the Egyptian Bureaucracy addressed several problems; such as: centralization, red tape, resistance to change, favoritism, apathy, and carelessness in delivering services to customers.

We will not be skeptic if we attributed these prolonged problems to the failure of administrative reform policies and programs all over this period, or at least claim their limited impact on achieving planned objectives. Reasons addressed behind this failure could be traced on the design level or the implementation level, or even on the monitoring and evaluation levels. One major reason behind this failure – according to the scope of this paper- represented in the absence of integrative frame for administrative reform programs, which the researcher will seek to investigate using the analytical frame of Fred W. Riggs Model for the development of communities.

This paper gains special importance at this time in which Egypt after the uprising of 25 January is trying to make a huge jump to the future in order to maintain the objectives and aspirations of Egyptian people when they revolt asking for their right to have sufficient food, liberty, and social justice the stakes are high and the government has to deliver. Inevitably we can presume that the way to get these aspirations done and delivered is through effective and efficient public service. Therefore, it is time to highlight mistakes done and contributed to the failure of previous endeavors to reform the public service in order to move ahead to build an efficient bureaucracy capable of achieving the Egyptian people's aspirations.

Accordingly, this paper tries to identify F. Riggs Prismatic model, then analyzing its implications on several reform programs took place during the period (1990-2000), and spotting the light on major reforms taking place after the revolution. This research is an exploratory study that depends on a deductive approach in trying to investigate the relevance of applying the criteria mentioned in Riggs Model for Prismatic Societies to get effective reform strategies. It also depends on an inductive approach in discussing and evaluating the reform policies in Egypt during (1990-2010) against the criteria deduced from Riggs Model.

2. The Prismatic Society in Riggs Model

In the seventies of last century, F. Riggs introduced his first model that tempted to analyze the development path of different societies based on one criterion that is "the degree of differentiation." As societies move towards being functionally specific, they become closer to be considered as developed community. The other extreme represented in what is called fused societies characterized by low degree of differentiation. The transitory stage between the two extremes was named "the Prismatic society"- which has its own features – that will be discussed later (Riggs, 1973:5-9). Worth to be mentioned Riggs used the term "Prismatic" to indicate the distracting or rarefying effect the prism makes to a light beam while passing through it. The figure below represents the perception of the first model.

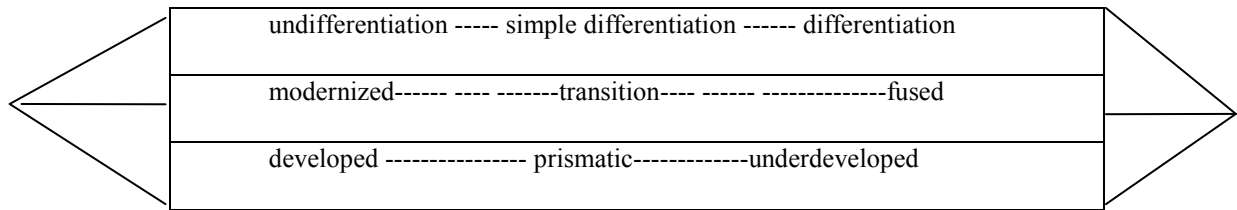


Figure 1. Riggs First Model

Riggs afterwards modified his one-dimensional model, as he noticed that the degree of differentiation was not the only criterion for communities' development. In his revised model he added another dimension alongside the former one, which is the degree of integration between the differentiated functions. According to his newest perception, a community may be functionally specific yet not considered as developed one, rather it is considered to be Prismatic, as far there is no integration among the diffracted functions. Consequently, the Prismatic society does not represent anymore the transitory stage between two extremes (Heady, 1984: 78-83). This model is represented in the following figure.

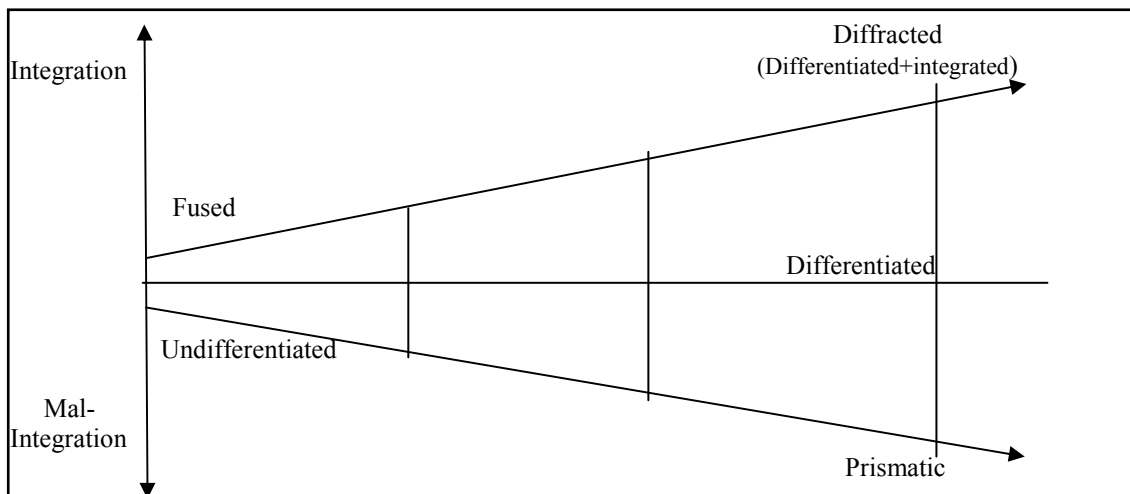


Figure 2. Riggs Second Model

The symptoms of the Prismatic society are represented in the following three dilemmas:

2.1 The Dilemma of Power

Any system in order to be maintained, there are two counteracting forces tend to affect it; central attractive force and centrifugal force. While the later force tends to keep the identity and independence of each element or each subsystem composing the whole system, the former force tends to articulate altogether these elements or subsystems to grantee the equilibrium of the whole system- presuming the equality of both forces. However, the power of each force differs from system to another. If equality maintained, then we assume that we are about a diffracted society (high degree of specialization accompanied with high degree of integration). Equilibrium failure towards more central attractive force, leads to more authoritarian autocratic society, whereas failure towards more centrifugal force leads to a prismatic society where there is high degree of specialization, but with lower degree of integration. Also, failure may happen toward more centrifugal force leading to chaotic societies (Riggs, 1973).

2.2 The Dilemma of Structure

This dilemma represents the relation between the organizational structure and tasks performed in any society. In other words, it represents the relation between formal and informal structures. The informal structure is overwhelming the Prismatic societies; where there is high degree of specialization represented in the existence of formal jobs nominally supposed to provide specific functions, however, these functions are performed by the informal structure (Riggs, 1973).

2.3 The Dilemma of Beliefs

This dilemma evidenced in the discrepancy between the beliefs – religious, ethnic, traditional- a person holds and the performance he shows. In Prismatic societies this discrepancy is too much widened, leading to artificial solutions provided to improperly solve problems. Therefore, both extremes; traditional and radical solutions are proposed and disguised under modernized shapes, seeking inherently in case of traditional solutions to maintain the central control and manipulation of governmental or religious institutions, or calling for secularism or

government total restructure for the radical solutions. In both cases the solutions are with no real contents since they are not addressing the real situations (Riggs, 1973).

3. Implications of Riggs Model on Administrative Reform

Based on Riggs' first model, we can assume that the degree of differentiation reflects the diversity in administrative reform packages. In this case it would be accepted to presume that (Aaref, 2006: 98-102):

- The more diversified the administrative reform package is, the more advanced the results achieved, or in other words the more effective it is, and
- The more developed the society or the administrative system, the more diversified programs it needs in order to get improved.

As for the **Second model**, conceiving its ideas in the case of administrative reform leads to the following deductions:

- The failure of many reform programs may be attributed to the lack of integration between their components. Moreover, this failure is not limited to developing countries, but it extends to encompass developed ones as far integration is not satisfied.
- Regarding the Dilemma of Power, we can assume that reform programs should maintain the balance between the changes they seek to achieve; i.e., centrifugal force, and the pillars of the existing systems; i.e., central attraction force. Failure to maintain the balance leads to the prevalence of the Prismatic society. The imbalance towards the centrifugal force leads to chaotic situation, whereas the imbalance towards the central force leads to artificial trivial improvements.
- The Dilemma of Structure has in its turn its important implications respecting Administrative reform. It calls for deep rational analysis to policies alternatives to ensure their relevance and applicability to the real reform requirements and needs. Otherwise, different deficiency facets will be encountered, necessitating thus the emergence of quasi structures to provide the role of the original ones.
- As for the Dilemma of Beliefs, it implies that traditional solutions could be adopted to maintain the prevailed distribution of power in the society, or dramatic generic solutions may represent the alternative rattling the status quo. Both orientations- as in Riggs analysis – do not provide realistic solutions to the existing administrative problems. Ensuring the Integration between different reform programs helps neither to sacrifice the system stability even if dramatic solutions are being adopted, nor to marginalize traditional reform effectiveness if they are being adopted among other institutional and legislative amendments.
- Also this Dilemma has its implications on steering the resulting changes. In modern systems changes happen smoothly and automatically through legal formal channels, whereas in immature systems the deficiency in formal channels leads to revolutionary impulsive reactions.

4. The Integration of Administrative Reform Programs

Administrative reform programs should reflect integrative strategy. By Integration we mean the following:

- Maintaining the balance between the components of the reform strategy; i.e., not to concentrate on talking just one facet of the system's problems. Enhancing wages; for example, should be accompanied with other alternatives based on real assessment of the problem; otherwise, partial reforms take place. Worth noting that partial reforms are the greatest enemy facing any change (Twfik, 2002: 60).
- Achieving Integration on the implementation phase requires directing reform efforts to work on macro and micro levels. Macro level refers to reorganizing relations between the systems' three authorities- legislative, judicial, and executive, whereas the micro level refers to the performance of public institutions individually. Also diversifying reform package is essential to seek the integration by adopting executive, legislative, bureaucratic and behavioral tools to amend the government sector (Rachid, 1996: 66-70).
- Integration also should be considered with respect to involving all stakeholders while setting and implementing reform agendas; i.e., public and organizations, representatives from the business and voluntary sector, and political and civic actors (Ashour, 1995: 25-27).
- Integration moreover should be applied when evaluating reform programs; i.e., evaluating the inputs and process as well as the output. Also integrated evaluation means relying on quantitative and qualitative evaluation techniques to guarantee to a great extent the validity and accuracy of both formative and summative evaluations (McNamara, 2006).

5. An Overview on Reform Policies in Egypt

This part will discuss – in short- the main symptoms of reform endeavors in Egypt after the Revolution 1952, and in more details during the specified period (1990's-2010). Following such analysis with an assessment of such endeavors with respect to the ideas developed from Riggs model. Afterwards some challenges facing reform after the Revolutions of 25th of January and 30th of June will be analyzed.

5.1 Reform Policies after Revolution 1952

○ Reforms during the 1950's:

Administrative consultations are the main symptom. Foreign consultants provided their insight to improve the civil service through enhancing workers conditions and provide them with proper training; i.e., falling short of providing a comprehensive frame for reform.

○ Reforms during the 1960's:

This era witnessed expansion in the government roles and activities and its interference in the economic sphere. The first five –year plan was formed (1959/1960- 1964/1965), in which concentration on leading posts and activating and developing tools of supervision and assessment were the main focus. It witnessed also the guidance of Gulik and Paulic's report in diagnosing Egypt's administrative system. However, Political conditions (The war with Israel and in Yemen) handicapped the continuity of the plan (El Baz, 1995: 102-104).

○ Reforms during the 1970's:

Political and Economic shifts took place calling for the establishment of national consulting committees guiding the president. In 1975 a second five-year plan for administrative reform was developed including six dimensions; organizational, personnel, leadership development, and the development of the laws and regulation and procedures. Nonetheless the plan was inconsistent with the national plan for economic and social development (El Deken, 2004:16).

○ Reforms during the 1980's:

Absence of a comprehensive vision for administrative reform was the main symptom, which was counteracted by the mid of this era by merging the plan for administrative reform with the economic and social development plan. Two five-year plans were formulated (1982-1987) and (1987-1992). The main contributions of such plans were: the enhancement of citizen related services, procedures simplification, introducing new system for selection for leadership posts, modifying reward and job analysis systems. Moreover the period witnessed the establishment of the Information and Decision Support Center (IDSC) in 1985 affiliated to the Cabinet to provide the government with information and technical expertise (Baradie and Zakaria, 2007: 117-119).

5.2 Reform Policies During 1990-2010

5.2.1 Reforms during the 1990's:

Politically, this era witnessed the domination of The National Democratic Party over the Parliament –both chambers, and the number of ministries reached 32 governing the administrative system (Valsan, 1995: 135). Socially, post 1952 Revolution the administrative apparatus enjoyed a noble status and it as perceived as a solution for societal problems; thus it was obligated to recruit all university graduates, leading to a tremendous increase in size; an increase that was not corresponding with relative increase in salaries. Demoralization of public servants and degradation of public services were inevitable. The deterioration accelerated with the adoption of the Open Door Policy during president Sadat's era due to the prices inflation (Palmer et al, 1988: 34-37).

This trend prevailed for two eras leading to an administrative apparatus with more than 4 million workers in the nineties, and increasing the worker- citizen ratio from 71 per 1000 citizens in 1987 to reach 90 by 1997 -this ratio in Japan 38, and 69 in USA (Ashour, 1995: 20).

Although the withhold of the employment policy – 1985/1986 class was the last university graduates appointed - employment in the government apparatus continued via what is called contingent contracts; which opened the door to nepotism, and increased hostility between permanent and contingent workers due to the difference in wage structure favoring the later (Valsan, 1997: 23-24).

Administratively, among the recommendations of the UNDP after analyzing the administrative apparatus in Egypt in 1989: reducing the number of university graduates, seizing new appointing in the government (Valsan, 1997: 11). This era witnessed two five year reform plans (1992-1997) and (1997-2002); the former sought mainly to downsize the government, automating the public services and abolishing many consultative bodies especially with conflicting authorities. The political and social cost of such plan was more than the government could afford due to the threat it represented to dominant beneficiaries (El Sayed, 2004).

In 1997, the government re-proposed its reform program according to Mr. Mohamed Zaki Abu Amer's vision; the minister of Administrative Development then. Among the procedures taken to enhance government performance were the followings (The Ministry of Administrative Development official site, 2004):

- Auditing all existing public posts and their specifications,
- Meeting transparency criteria in employment,
- Procedure simplification; modifying thereby 450 post out of 728, unifying rules governing services provision (El Sayed, 2004), and the establishment of what is called “citizen kiosks” to facilitate service provision (El

Deken, 2004.: 69),

- Good preparation and development of top executives by issuing Law 5/1991 which specify clear criteria for occupying top posts based on selection rather than routine promotion for specified period and rigorous assessment,
- Complying with the economic policy towards encouraging foreign investment, the establishment of governorate level offices serving investors (Baradie and Zakaria, 2007: 122),
- The establishment of Technical Offices supporting different ministries- as an application of what is called fast track approach with all its limitations (Aaref, 2007: 70-71),
- Privatization movement and early retirement program as means to cut of public expenditures (Ministry of Administrative Development, 1995).

Nonetheless; this period witnessed an increase in civil service cost relative to total public expenditure to the ratio of three fourth; in which salaries and wages represent the greater portion. Also this era witnessed increase in current expenditures at the expense of investment expenditure (El Deken, 2004: 23-24, 27).

5.2.2 Reforms during the first era of the new millennium:

During this era another five year plan was formulated (2002-2007); in which the government primarily concerned about technological intrusion and development in the governmental apparatus. The Ministry of Communication and Information Technology took the initiative with collaboration with other ministries to reform the civil service and improve the quality of services provided through simplifying procedures and information availability. In accordance to such initiative the emphasis was on enacting and activating the applications of the E-Government. Further, in 21st of September 2002 an agreement signed between the Ministry of Local Development and the UNDP to develop the technological capacity of local communities (Administrative Reform in the Mediterranean Region). The E- government program managed to: foster transparency and facilitate the accessibility to public services by both citizens and investors, provide 50 services on the official port of the government and 6 new investment services, and establish 500 kiosks to facilitate service provision at the local level administered by the private sector via contacting with university graduates (Mossa, 2007).

Moving towards Governance was another symptom of the era represented in activating the roles of the business and civic sectors in implementing and monitoring public services- especially in higher education, healthcare, and public transportation (Mossa, 2007).

In order to supplement all the previous attempts, the era witnessed momentum of legislatives and a legal proposal ahead of which the law known as “the New Public Service Law” that was subject to ongoing arguments and deliberations due to its political and social cost, till it was finally enacted by the Egyptian Cabinet in beginning of 2015; noting that there is not till the moment of writing this paper an independent legislative chamber due to partial fulfillment of the road map issued by President El-Sisi after ousting his predecessor in response to overwhelming public demand.

6. Critiques of Reforms in Egypt using Riggs Ideas

Endeavors towards reforming the administrative system in Egypt during the specified era could be done according to the integration perspective of Riggs Model on different dimensions - as follows:

6.1. Integration of variables included

All reform programs mentioned previously sought to develop several variables – physical and human. However failure to manage the resistance to change considered the main obstacle towards reform effectiveness. Also failure could be attributed to the short breath policy that makes reform strategy differs according to the decision maker in power. Moreover, variables were not dealt with in an integrative fashion; i.e., focusing on some variables while marginalizing others. Privatization – for example- starting from 2000 the government rushed incredibly to privatize many public entities without any vision and discarding the precautions that ought to be considered; i.e., the national importance of privatized entities as it privatized for example Al Mragel Company established in 1961 for producing pressure tubes and steal ovens to a Canadian company- Al Mragel was perceived to be an initiative to a first nuclear experiment (El Kasas, 22 Sep. 2011). Other criteria were sacrificed also in the privatization process such as the absence of any grantees not to transform the public monopoly to a private one – as happened in the cement and steel industry. Grantees also to ensure transparency and monitoring were absent (Abdel. Khalek, 2008: 18).

6.2 Integration on the Macro and Micro levels

Some authors perceive that all reform plans included in this period did not imply any merge between administrative units, establishment of new or the deletion of others (El Deken, 2004., 48). Nonetheless, the researcher perceives that the establishment of the Technical Offices as supplementary units in all ministries may be a sort of restructuring- at least on the micro level. In addition to the establishment of what were called citizen

service offices – kiosk- could be perceived also as restructuring or more specifically reengineering at the micro level. The erection of such entities represents an application of Riggs' dilemma of structure as functions tended to be performed outside the institutions supposed formally to deliver. Similarly, the adoption of the E-government- although it has not been fully applicable till the moment – could be considered as a form of reengineering government procedures at the macro level .

6.3 Integration of actors involved

Most reform strategies in Egypt are mandated by international institutions lacking; thus, popular support by the parties supposed to implement; i.e., government organizations, civic initiations, and most important the ordinary citizen who is absent largely in decision makers' agenda; although supposedly considered a focal element in monitoring and judging the success of any endeavor (Ashour, 1995: 30). Ironically, the behaviors of citizens are perceived to propagate the malpractice and apathy in the Egyptian public administration; i.e., giving bribes, depending on favoritism, and breaking the rules for mutual benefits (Tawfik, 2002: 150-151)

6.4 Integration in implementation

Reform plans during the nineties depended heavily on two tools for implementation; the bureaucratic and legislative. The bureaucratic tool represented in simplifying administrative procedures and the full auditing for all posts and their specifications- mentioned earlier. The establishment of what was called fast track or the parallel entities to improve public services - represented in the establishment of technical and citizen service offices - was good example of using the bureaucratic tool. However, the researcher has her own limitation on using such tool in the long run as it may lead to even more bureaucratization as far the new institution remains side by side the old ones. Legislatively reforms were evidenced in unifying all rules governing the civil service and eliminating others. Also some others were issued as with Law 5/1991 for defining criteria to potential occupants of leading posts. Realistically, seniority remained the main criterion for employment and promotion in such posts. The low income offered for these posts de-motivated executives from the business sector to apply for them, limiting thus the selection to those existing internally and favoring more senior applicants (Valsan, 1997). This orientation reveals another application of Riggs' dilemma of beliefs due to the separation between what laws call for and what takes place in reality.

As for the political and behavioral tools, no evidence during the timeframe specified reveals their utilization, excepting if we consider the change of the cabinet at the beginning of the millennium as an example of using the political tool; by replacing El-Ganzory government for Aatef Ebied's, thereby seeking a mentality or an orientation favoring the shift to a more liberal economy and slimmer government though privatization movements. Similarly, with dr. Nazeef in office (2004) as a prime minister, he imposed his insight on the government agenda as an electronic engineer and pre-mister of telecommunication; leading thus to accelerating the movement towards applying the E-government or what was called Smart Government even though the lack of community and infrastructure readiness .

6.5 Integration of Evaluation Approaches:

Usually no formal data concerning the effiteness of any of the reform programs throughout all reform plans in the period specified; maintaining thus the randomness of all reform endeavors based on trial and error. Consequently the concern about evaluating any government performance has not been evidenced. The main reason behind the negligence of auditing and evaluation is the absence of accountability- which represents a focal element towards ensuring transparency and effectiveness. Accordingly it is acceptable to see a decision maker moves from applying certain plan to another one without clear assessment of the precedent. Partially the negligence of evaluation could be further attributed to the unclear or poorly defined objectives and their related measurement criteria stated in any of the government plans. This chaos was deeply evidenced in the privatization procedures and processes that were tremendously attacked for many years until the eruption of Egyptian revolutions (El Kasas, 2011).

7. Conclusion/ Results

Based on reviewing the main features of administrative reform programs in Egypt during 1990s – 2010, it is clear that they were not formulated according to clear objectives or definite strategies; rather they took a reactive scattered approach in dealing with administrative problems. Further, they almost represented trials to copy or import reform approaches from other ecologies with no consideration of the consequences or cultural differences. This is clear in the dichotomy witnessed between the objectives stated, for Law 5/1991 for leadership posts, also for all privatization procedures, and the proven practices in the real world.

Another point worth mentioning is the lack of integration between reform strategies and other nation-wide strategies economically and politically. It is illogical to presume the success of economic strategies without corresponding simultaneous reforms administratively; minimizing bureaucratization, and politically to provide

the political system will and support.

It is notable also that reform endeavors lack clear vision to determine contingent plans to be applied in changing situations. Thus, reform plans in Egypt lack the required flexibility to learn from mistakes and to achieve ongoing improvements. This was clear in the discontinuity of reform plans due to the change happened in the top executives; ministers of administrative development- as stated previously (Management and Development Center).

Moreover, the mismanagement of change was represented in poor marketing for reform policies and negligence of civic engagement in formulating these policies for the sake of minimizing potential inertia, which was very tangible regarding Law 5/1991 and privatization movements against which many criticisms were addressed. This notion particularly has been rectified with the "New Employment Law" initiated by Dr. Ahmed Darwish- Minister of Administrative Development (2004-20011) – during the last four years of him in office. The Law underwent so many deliberations with representatives in the civic societies; unions, syndicates, and pressure groups. It was under major societal attacks, due to the rattle it sought to apply in the civil service by trying to equate the employment conditions with that prevailing in the business sector; mainly regarding its orientation towards depending on time specified contracts rather than life -long employment (Al Masry el Youm, Nov. 2006). Also it has been referred back and forth to the parliament 17 times to make amendments, till its final issuing in December 2014 with very moderate amendments- compared to what was planned- to the existing old Labor Law of 47/1978 (Ministry of Planning Monitoring and Administrative Reform, 2014). Nonetheless yet subject to severe attack specially from the judicial chamber as it claims that the law threatens or contacts its authority in inspection and interrogation (Al-Ahram Daily, 2015:37)

Finally, utilizing Riggs model for Prismatic Societies as an evaluation framework for reform policies throughout twenty years revealed a great deal of similarity between the symptoms specified for such communities and that of the reform policies and programs underwent in this period. That is we can conclude that Egypt adopted Prismatic programs to reform its administrative system; i.e., it adopted diversified tools and programs but with almost complete negligence of the integrity among them or among the key players in formulating and implanting them. Consequently leading to substance evacuation reaching; thus, artificial programs failing to address and correct the damage and problems dominating the administrative system in Egypt in the past and present.

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