

Abstract

Transition over the last two decades to more open politics and markets generated pressures for administrative change. Administrative reform in Mexico made little headway in the 1990s. Arellano and Guerrero argue that the key obstacle to bureaucratic modernization (particularly of the Weberian variety) was the close historical fusion between political and the administrative elites. Mexican reformers opted for a superficial managerial reform as a way to improve efficiency without upsetting one of the cornerstones of the PRI-Dominated regime.

The chapter provides an overview of Mexico's public administration, a thorough survey of recent reform initiatives, and a detailed case study of the failed attempt to create a career civil service in the late 1990s. The general guidelines of the Zedillo government for administrative reform were: citizen participation and service, administrative decentralization, evaluation and measurement of public management, and professionalization and ethics (this is civil service component).

The chapter offers three alternative Hypotheses: 1) the integration of party and bureaucracy thwarts reform; 2) successful reform requires horizontal accountability; and 3) if the real rules of bureaucracy are informal than merely formal reforms will fail.