1 INTRODUCTION

The growth of government activities in the Arab world after independence was accompanied by an increase in the size and importance of bureaucracy. With full control over the public purse the Arab state became responsible for charting social and economic development policies and for the bureaucracy empowered to implement them. The challenge of Arab bureaucracies to transform their societies rapidly from traditional to modern entities has contributed to their size and vested them with an intense concentration of powers. In turn, their size and their acquired powers have increased the opportunity for corruption, unethical conduct and the misuse of public office for personal profit. Moreover, within the context of this new administrative culture, attempts at reforming the bureaucracy in the Arab world have not been successful.

In his book Politics without process: administering development in the Arab world Jamil E Jreisat (1997:20–21) provided many reasons for the failure of administrative reforms with a particular focus on the inadequate administration of development, the problems of poor leadership and on the insufficient institutional capacity. Moreover, on the basis of a survey of recent administrative reform programs in several Arab states, Jreisat (1997:89) added that the politicisation of public administration has compounded democratic corruption among public servants who lack the requisite management skills to implement and monitor development efforts. The administrative reforms which were implemented in the Arab world lacked concrete means of carrying out the programs and measuring the
results. Instead, programs have been limited to applying "band-aid approach to a heavily bleeding patient" (Jreisat 1997:89). Furthermore, there are no appropriate safeguards and proper checks and balances to protect the Arab public from bureaucratic abuses. Thus, in carrying out their official responsibilities, Arab public servants are not accountable for their actions and behaviour.

2 THE DECEIVING ADMINISTRATIVE CULTURE OF FORMAL CONTROL MECHANISMS

The poor performance of bureaucracy in the Arab world and the inability of Arab governments to reform bureaucracy seem puzzling. A cursory examination of Arab bureaucracy would point to the presence in the Arab World of a special administrative culture which is reflected in the significant number of formal control mechanisms designed to insure accountability and integrity.

The first formal control mechanism is internal and governed by the pyramidal structure of the bureaucracy whereby each administrative layer is accountable to the next higher one. Moreover, the behaviour of public servants, their rights, responsibilities and positions are regulated by laws enacted by either a legislative branch and promulgated by presidential decrees, or enacted by royal decrees upon the recommendation of the Council of Ministers, which, in the absence of a legislative assembly exercises both legislative and executive powers (Al-Farsi 1978:94–95).

The second kind of control mechanism is external and comprises political, administrative, juridical and non-official watch-dogs which presumably strive to make sure that the bureaucracy is accountable, efficient and productive. In Lebanon for example, the political heads of the departments are the ministers, who are accountable for their departments to the cabinet; in turn, the cabinet is accountable to parliament collectively and individually, for the bureaucracy. Members of parliament are elected politicians, required to monitor the bureaucracy, apply pressure on the cabinet, and explain any irregularities in the behaviour of public servants. The pressure may be increased by bringing the matter to the public's attention. On a number of occasions, the pressure of parliament serves to bring about much needed administrative reforms.

Administrative watch-dogs play a similar role. For example, the Civil Service Commission, created in 1959, is in charge of developing and
maintaining a strong and capable civil service. Its responsibilities include recruitment, training, promotion, transfer and retirement matters. In addition, it hears complaints from civil servants in relation to transfer requests and disciplinary matters involving penalty or dismissal (Grasmuck and Salibi 1964:4).

The Central Inspection Administration, created in 1961, sets and administers inspection policies aimed at improving procedures, reducing costs and increasing efficiency. Its jurisdiction extends over all divisions of the administration, with the exception of the army and the judiciary (Kisirwani 1971:173).

The Council of State serves as a court of appeal and cassation for administrative cases assigned by a special law to other courts. In 1965, the General Disciplinary Council for Public Officials was established to deal with all administrative infractions except by members of the Civil Service Commission, the Central Inspection Administration, security forces, autonomous agencies and municipalities (Salem 1973:59).

Finally, open hearings, interest groups, and organized citizens participation and pressure attempt to keep public servants accountable and prevent them from using their public office for personal gain.

As in Lebanon, government departments and central agencies in Egypt are accountable to their ministers. In turn, the ministers are accountable individually to the cabinet and collectively to the national assembly for the actions and behaviour of public employees working within their ministries. In reality, the cabinet is responsible to the President of Egypt, whose office wields enormous powers.

Cabinet committees and central agencies presumably monitor the accountability of public employees. Ministerial committees were established by the Council of Ministers to coordinate and account for the execution of public policy in planning, legislation, organisation and administration, economic affairs, human resources and local administration. Independent central and control agencies (eg, Central Agency for Training, Central Agency for Organization and Administration, Central Auditing Agency, etc) perform the same functions (Ayubi 1980:200).

Administrative vigilance is also provided by the Council of State, The Administrative Parquet Department (Al-Niyaba Al-Idariyyah), the Ad-
ministrative Inspection Department (Al-Raqaba Al-Idariyyah), the Ministry of State Department and the Secretariat of the President.

The Council of State was established in 1946 and is the supreme administrative court. Patented after the French Council of State, it consists of a judicial section and a consultative section on administrative regulations and their interpretation. Created in 1954, the Administrative Parquet Department oversees procedures of control and investigation of administrative violations and hears complaints and calls for disciplinary action against public officials; the Administrative Inspection Department inspects the work of public officials and ensures the proper application of laws and the correction of any errors in administrative, technical, or financial procedures; finally, the General Secretariat of the Presidency serves as a channel of communication and the liaison between the President’s Office and the various ministries and is indirectly involved in administrative control activities (Ayubi 1980:201).

In Saudi Arabia, the King exercises his supervision and control of the Saudi bureaucracy through the Council of Ministers and his Private Office (Stacy International 1977:95). The Council of Ministers, established in 1953, is the most powerful, central, and dynamic institution in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It is responsible to the King for all its activities and those of the bureaucracy which serves as its agent. Through their respective ministers, departments are accountable for the action and behaviour of their employees to the Council of Ministers and to the King. Central and independent agencies are accountable directly to the King. Although their heads possess ministerial powers, they do not normally participate in the deliberations of the Council of Ministers (Al-Awaji 1971:126–131).

The following will serve as illustrations:

The Civil Service Board, established by a royal decree in 1977, attends to civil service matters (e.g., personnel, salary, position classification, etc.) in all ministries, public agencies and corporations, and strives to ensure accountability and high quality performance among public employees. To this end, it continually makes policy recommendations to the Council of Ministers (Al-Mazrua 1980:290).

The General Bureau of Civil Service reports to the Civil Service Board and has a mandate to enhance the accountability and efficiency of Saudi public servants; it supervises closely the execution of civil service laws, regulations and resolutions, and carries out research in the area of position
classification, compensation, allowance and awards; it makes recommenda-
tions to the Civil Service Board, which is required to submit to the King
an annual report on the state of the Saudi civil service (Tawati 1976:120-

The Institute Of Public Administration was created by a royal decree in 1971
to provide training for Saudi public servants and enhance accountability
among them. Article II of its statute states clearly that the objective of the
Institute of Public Administration is: “To promote the efficiency of civil
servants and to qualify them theoretically and practically to be able to
assume their responsibilities in a way that will promote the level of
administration and foster the development of the national economy.”

The High Committee for Administrative Reform was established as a
continuing body by the Council of Ministers in 1963 (resolution 520) to
spearhead the administrative reform, reorganise existing government
agencies, create new departments and develop new and effective work
systems and methods for the purpose of improving efficiency and
accountability among Saudi public servants. In carrying out its respon-
sibilities, the High Committee is helped by the Staff Committee for

The Central Department for Organisation and Management was established
by a royal decree in 1966, with a mandate to foster efficiency and
effectiveness in the Saudi public service, make Saudi public servants
accountable for their actions and behaviour, monitor the execution of
reform recommendations adopted by the High Committee for Adminis-
trative Reform and initiate needed administrative development (Al-Mazrua

Finally, the Grievance Board, created in 1954, represents an extension of the
traditional practice of direct accessibility to the King by any citizen who has
a grievance against the bureaucracy (Al-Ghamdi 1982:142–144).

Variations of the above formal administrative structures can be found
throughout the Arab World as well as in non-Arab Middle Eastern
countries (eg, Iran, Israel, Turkey) (Farazmand 1989; Farsoun and
Mashaekhi 1992; Perez and Dorn 1997). In fact, in a number of cases, these
structures are similar to and even patterned after those of bureaucracies in
Western democracies. If this is the case, why have public bureaucracies been
on the whole inefficient and ineffective in the Arab World and why have
Arab leaders failed to reform them? The answer to these questions can be
found easily in a more careful and detailed analysis of Arab public bureaucracies, which would show the superficial and deceiving character of the administrative culture of formal control mechanisms.

3 THE REAL ADMINISTRATIVE CULTURE IN THE ARAB WORLD

The concern of Arab governments since World War II to develop and modernise their countries has led them to adopt, at times wholesale Western management philosophy and administrative structures. This exercise proved unsuccessful because Western innovations were implanted in an environment which continues to be influenced by a pervasive and powerful traditional administrative culture which draws its strength from two main sources: one, administrative and structural; the other, social and behavioural.

3.1 The administrative and structural source:

Six traditional cultural streams nurture this source. They are: overcentralisation, outmoded systems, administrative expansion, overstaffing, rigidity and complexity of rules, and salary structure.

3.1.1 Overcentralisation

Overcentralization of administrative structure and overconcentration of authority characterize bureaucracies in the Arab World. First, authoritarian superiors and top managers are usually accompanied by passive subordinates. Second, the large span of control and lengthy lines of command easily cause loose control and distortion of orders. Third, subordinates rely to excess on their superiors and send them minor administrative problems for resolution; as a consequence, senior public servants become occupied by administrative minutiae instead of spending their time on more important matters, resulting in, fourth, underemployment of subordinates and underutilization of their talents. Fifth, influence peddling and corruption tend to thrive. Finally, citizens waste time and money by having to travel often to the capital to crowded offices in order to finalize their transactions. The Egyptian administrative system, for example, is overcentralized and authority is concentrated in the hands of top bureaucrats. In fact, centralization in government organizations became the preferred Egyptian solution for any problem of coordination (Ayubi 1977:18).
The rapid structural changes that took place in Egypt between 1952 and 1970 gave rise to a complex and overcentralized organizational structure, which was cumbersome and unwieldy (Ayubi 1980:234–235). Moreover, all the major steps taken by the Egyptian central government to improve local governments failed to decentralise the system and to delegate more authority to local government officials. Even in public enterprises, there is a general tendency towards centralisation (Abdo-Khalil 1983:67). Egyptian officials are always trying to concentrate more power in their own hands. In an editorial in 1982, the Egyptian Gazette stated that “with such material and moral accoutrements adorning the post of manager, it is only natural that officials should be vying with one another to attain this post through all means available, not excluding hypocrisy, bribery, backbiting, double-dealing and deception.”

Palmer, Yassin and Leila (1985:323–337) provided an empirical assessment of the excessive centralisation in the Egyptian bureaucracy. Their conclusions supported Ayubi’s (1980) thesis that centralisation of authority in the Egyptian bureaucracy was a problem of major proportions. They also concluded that the sources of centralisation in the Egyptian bureaucracy were rooted both in the pragmatic realities of bureaucratic life and in the broader dimension of Egyptian culture. Similar illustrations exist in the rest of the Arab World (Munla n.d.:11; Bashir 1965:47; Al-Bilani 1966:263; Grassmuck and Salibi: 5; Nakib 1972:132; Al-Awaji 1971:206, 209; Saudi Ministry of Planning: 571; Chackerian and Shadukhi 1983:319–322).

3.1.2 Outmoded Systems

Despite the substantial amounts of money Arab countries spend on modernising their bureaucracies, most of them still have dated administrative structures, outmoded systems and procedures and old technical and physical facilities; all of these foster an administrative culture characterised by an unsystematic flow of information, poor coordination, lack of comprehensive planning, difficulty of control and supervision, red-tape and inefficiency.

In the Lebanese bureaucracy, for example, outmoded technical systems and procedures are still used in financial information and programme training. Typewriters, calculators, and computers are not sufficiently available and inadequate physical and storage facilities are standard. Government buildings lack central heating and adequate lighting and furnishing. The offices of many directorates are dispersed throughout the capital city of

Although by contrast to Lebanon and Egypt, Saudi Arabia has had enough oil revenues to build modern physical facilities and provide state-of-the-art equipment, experts continue to complain about the absence of science, technology, management by objectives, scientific management and organisational development (Al-Khaldi 1983:44–45).

Moreover working conditions, filing systems, office layouts, maintenance services and typing and copying facilities are still inadequate. Lengthy, cumbersome and outdated procedures continue to hamper the normal flow of work and do not encourage efficiency and accountability (Al-Hegelan 1994:12). Even in recruitment, the methods used to advertise positions are inadequate and ineffective: often vacancies are not advertised at all, and even when they are, they do not specify the qualifications or duties and responsibilities. The same applies to entrance examinations and assessment for transfers and promotions (Binsaleh 1982:130).

3.1.3 Expansion

The emergence of the Arab state in the post World War II era as the chief employer and provider caused a rapid, unexpected and unplanned expansion of the bureaucracy, which hampered the development of a strong sense of accountability among public servants. This situation made proper control, coordination, and supervision extremely difficult to achieve; it also caused overstaffing and underemployment, lack of clearly defined lines of responsibility, and in some cases lack of qualified personnel.

For example, the 1950s was a turning point in the history of Saudi Arabia. With oil revenues increasing, the bureaucracy began to expand rapidly to provide Saudi citizens with the services they needed. The new and rapid expansion of the bureaucracy did not provide an environment conducive to the internalisation and development of accountability among the new Saudi public servants. The reasons were simple. Control, coordination, and planning were inadequate, particularly at the implementation level, despite the existence of agencies for these functions; procedures for responding to the pressing needs of the population were outdated; and the functions, positions and responsibilities for public servants were not clearly defined in organisational manuals (Al-Sadhan 1980:80). Hence, a total state of
confusion would at times cripple public agencies and departments, bringing administrative transactions to a standstill (Warner 1964:6; Al-Awaji 1971:18). Similar problems are found in other Arab countries (Grassmuck and Salibi: 18; Ayubi 1982:326).

3.1.4 Overstaffing

Overlapping and lack of qualified personnel in key government areas do not promote a culture of accountability among Arab public servants. In Lebanon, for example, the promotion policy contributed significantly to overstaffing. Promotions were made annually between ranks regardless of whether there were vacancies for those promoted (Nakib 1972:105). Overstaffing of the Egyptian bureaucracy reaches extreme dimensions at most levels, and estimates of excess workforce are about 15% of all employees (Al-Ahram Al-Iqtisadi 1979). Overstaffing results from the steady pressure on the government to provide employment and from the bargaining attitude of top officials, who exaggerate their personnel needs in order to increase prestige and opportunity for promotion. According to Ayubi (1980:247) sectoral and geographic overstaffing contributes to bureaucratic inflation, idleness, cynicism and disguised unemployment in the Egyptian bureaucracy and thus creates a hostile cultural environment for accountability among public servants.

The lack of qualified personnel is a more serious problem in Saudi Arabia (Tawati 1976:6; Alnimir 1981:26; Al-Ghamdi 1982:66). As the Saudi public service expanded rapidly in response to rising oil revenues and the desire of the royal family to provide Saudi citizens with new services, the unavailability of qualified Saudi personnel proved to be a major handicap in building an accountable and responsible bureaucracy (Ford Foundation 1963:3; Al-Awaji 1971:219; Sadik 1965:196).

The government of Saudi Arabia broached this problem in three ways. First, it began hiring non-Saudis, largely from the Arab countries; second, it established the Institute of Public Administration in the early 1960s to train public employees; and finally, and most seriously, it tried to substitute for the lack of qualified personnel by overstaffing government offices with people who did not have the proper training to serve the public responsibly. The problem was further compounded by mismatching between the qualifications of public employees and requirements of their positions (for more details on the above, see Al-Awaji 1971:221–222; Tawati 1976:4; Binsaleh 1982:24; Al-Khaldi 1983:193).
3.1.5 Rigidity and Complexity of Rules

Public Servants subject to rigid and complex rules seldom take initiatives, nor can they be accountable for their actions and behaviour. In Arab bureaucracies, rigidity stems from overcentralization of authority and a legalistic approach to administrative decision making and procedures, which do not allow much room for innovation. In fact, rigidity leads to a tendency among Arab public servants to avoid responsibility, especially when they are faced with new problems which are not foreseen and regulated by law. Moreover, laws and regulations which govern administrative behaviour are often rigid and confusing (Lebanon’s Civil Service Commission Report 1969; Ayubi 1977:17; Attrabi 1982; Murad 1983:31).

The Saudi bureaucracy, for example, suffers from rigidity and complex rules and regulations. Thus, before a matter can be sent to a top bureaucrat for his signature and directive, it is subjected to a lengthy and time consuming procedure involving the approval of several officials within the agency, each of whom may go through a similar exercise (Al-Ghamdi 1982:286; Al-Hegelan 1984:12; Alnimir and Palmer 1982).

3.1.6 Salary Structure

Salary structure is a sensitive issue in the administrative culture of Arab public servants. It has a direct effect on an employee’s efficiency, accountability, and moral conduct. It also influences the government’s ability to recruit and maintain qualified personnel. For example, the low salary structure for public employees in Lebanon, specially after the conclusion of the 1975 civil war, is leading to two serious results: First, competent people receive more attractive salary offers from the private sector and stay away from or leave the Lebanese public service; second, those who join or stay in it are afflicted with low morale and forced to look for other income to compensate for their low salary (Lebanon, Civil Service Commission 1969:2; An-Nahar 1969:3). Moreover, the automatic salary increases, which are granted indiscriminately and not on merit are another major contributor to the unwillingness of the employee to work harder or to show more innovation and accountability in carrying out his/her responsibilities (Nakib 1972:107).

The salary structure for Egyptian bureaucrats is also low, and most Egyptian public servants have poor salaries (CAOA 1969:15). The low salary structure and the relative deprivation of Egyptian bureaucrats
produce in many higher officials a perpetual obsession with obtaining higher salaries (Al-Salami 1968). This obsession causes public employees to join the private sector for better salaries or to practice corruption to compensate for their low remunerations (Rose Al-Yousef 1966).

Despite improvements in the compensation scale for Saudi public servants, the problem of inadequate salaries continues to contribute greatly to the problems of turnover and low standards of morality and personal integrity (Tawati 1976:156–171). Rising expectations, rapid social transformations as well as economic and inflationary pressures continue to tempt government employees to seek different sources of income by going into business or joining corporations and doubling their salaries. As we will see in the next section, low salaries and rising expectations may lead to an administrative culture marked by laxity in moral standards and personal integrity, and to corruption, graft and profiteering (Tawati 1976:171; Abussuud 1979:163–166). In both cases, high standards of performance and accountability among Arab public servants suffer a great deal.

3.2 The Sociocultural and Behavioural Source

Traditional customs, attitudes and behaviour that are deeply imbedded in Arab public servants include nepotism and favouritism, patron-client relationships, corruption, avoidance of responsibility, and lack of adequate training.

3.2.1 Nepotism and Favouritism

The family continues to rival the state as the focal point of loyalty and security in Arab countries. In fact, accountability to one’s family often takes precedence over accountability to the state and thus leads to a culture and practice of nepotism. Moreover, loyalty to the family is paralleled by a strong devotion to one’s village and friends, thus leading to a culture of favouritism. Neither is conducive to a culture of accountability among Arab public servants. For example, family, friendship, geographical ties are strong in Lebanon and loyalty to them is the hallmark of the Lebanese bureaucracy (Nakib 1972:101). Thus, despite the professionalisation of the Lebanese civil service, it is not only permissible “socially” but mandatory for a zaim (political leader) to appoint family members and friends to prestigious posts in the Lebanese bureaucracy. As a consequence, the qualified child of an ordinary Lebanese citizen experiences difficulty in finding a post in the
bureaucracy when competing with an equally or less qualified child of a prominent leader or the child or a friend of a prominent leader. Thus, nepotism is a major hindrance to the growth of a culture of accountability in the Lebanese bureaucracy. A public servant who owes his or her appointment to a family zaim or a friend is likely to delay, derail or obstruct regular administrative procedures in order to repay the debt (Salem 1973:88–89).

Because of loyalty to family, Saudi public servants practice nepotism and are partial in assigning jobs and distributing benefits (Lipsky 1959:45). This is confirmed by Louis G. Kornninghauer’s observation that: “Since the entire social structure has been based on kinship, it is not surprising to find a certain amount of influence being exercised in favour of relatives. In this society it is taken for granted that an individual will use his position to benefit his relatives” (1963:1). The same conclusion can be drawn with regards to an administrative culture of loyalty to one’s friends, village and region (Al-Awaji 1971:230–242).

3.2.2 The Patron-Client Relationship

A culture of unethical and irresponsible practices in the bureaucracy may result from a strong patron-client system. In Arab countries, as well as most developing societies, where identification with the national community and its laws is still weak, protection is sought outside the family through ties with powerful protectors or patrons (Jabra & Jabra 1983:133). This system of relationships has encouraged the development and institutionalization of an administrative culture of disrespect for accountability and regulations. Patron-client relationships, patronage and influence go hand in hand with a culture of unethical conduct and a climate where personal profit and private loyalty take precedence over public duty. For example, before the 1975 civil war in Lebanon, the Lebanese public service was plagued by absenteeism which was assiduously practiced by public servants who felt they could be away from their jobs during working hours because they enjoyed the protection of their patron. This behaviour resulted in delays in the processing of administrative transactions and inconvenience to Lebanese citizens, who were forced to resort to bribery to buy what should have been their right (Jabra & Jabra 1983:133–134).

In order to remedy the problem of absenteeism, the Lebanese government introduced a new public measure, whereby timeclocks were installed in all public institutions; all civil servants were required to record their time of
arrival and departure. But, protected by a system of patron-client relationships, public officials devised a trick to beat the system. They either alternated in punching each other’s timecards or they asked their janitors to do it for them. The Lebanese press reported that on 19 March 1971, when the Minister of Information paid a surprise visit to the officials in his ministry, he found all unit chiefs absent, although their time cards showed them to be present (An-Nahar, September, 1969). Lebanon’s Civil Service Commission has observed repeatedly that in the Lebanese civil service, a culture of private interest and loyalty to patrons take precedence over public duty (Lebanon, Civil Service Commission: 1966, 1967, 1968). In 1971, Kisirwani (1971:128) reported that the results of his data confirmed that at least 40% of Lebanese public employees left their jobs daily for one hour or more to run private errands.

Another manifestation of institutionalized culture of unethical practices, promoted in Lebanon by the patron-client system was the processing of illegitimate transaction (Jabbra & Jabbra 1983:134), and the use of wastah or pull by a zaim to help his clients outside the appropriate administrative channels (Al-Haj 1972:8). The patron-client relationship and the wastah have always been prevalent in other Arab countries with similar negative effects on their administrative cultures (Ayubi 1977:29; Ayubi 1980:157, 466; Lipsky 1959:163; Al-Awaji 1971:233; Al-Khaldi 1983:41).

### 3.2.3 Corruption

Because it means the use of public office for personal gain, corruption is a serious cultural flaw in Arab societies and their bureaucracies. Corruption has many causes: weak commitment to the national interest and the common good; changing economic status of public servants, which makes their salary insufficient to satisfy their rising expectations and love of ostentation; the confusing network of government institutions and regulations; and an oversupply of graduates seeking a limited number of available positions, thus opening the door for bribes. All these factors have given Arab public servants a golden opportunity to cultivate the art of bribery and corruption by systematically using their public offices to promote and protect their private interests.

For example, although it is difficult to collect hard facts about a culture of corruption in Saudi Arabia, one can identify several factors that account for its prevalence among Saudi public servants (Alnimir 1981:27). First, the Saudis public spirit and loyalty to the national interest is weak because of
the commitment to parochial and particularistic values (Al-Awaji 1971:242-243). Saudi public servants are expected to use their public positions in order to maximise their personal interest. In the words of Lipski, “It is keeping with old practice in the area for officials at all levels to take advantage of their position to enrich themselves. Those who did not do so would be regarded as stupid and eccentric.” (1959:178).

Second, Saudi public servants are over-impressed by the achievements of their counterparts in Europe and North America. The rising expectations concerning consumer goods such as cars and appliances have caused many Saudi public servants to seek extra financial resources by methods that are not sanctioned by law. In his 1971 doctoral dissertation, Al-Awaji (1971:243) reported a discussion with a highly educated Saudi official who was then pursuing graduate studies in the United States. The official stated that the fixed monthly salary no longer satisfied the needs of Saudi public servants and corruption was too complex to be resolved by his own refraining from it.

Third, over-centralisation of authority in the hands of a few officials also facilitates corruption. The lack of an effective system of control and supervision and the lack of accountability nurture a culture of corruption. In the early 1960s, the government of Saudi Arabia, in an effort to control corruption, issued a form headed “Where Did You Get This?” on which government employees were to list all their properties so that the government could compare their income with their holdings. Unfortunately, no one bothered either to fill out the form or to collect them, and the regulation was forgotten (Al-Tawail 1970:46). Similar illustrations can be found in other Arab countries (Kisirwani 1971:79–86; Jabra & Jabra 1983:134–135). It is important to note that this culture of corruption is not limited to Arab public servants. It can also be found in other non-Arab developing societies and constitutes a major challenge in their efforts to build more efficient administrative structures and develop a climate of honesty and integrity among public servants.

3.2.4 Laxity and Avoidance of Responsibilities

Laxity and avoidance of responsibility constitute two additional and serious flaws in the administrative culture of Arab bureaucracies. For example, in Lebanon, bureaucrats often come to work late, show little interest in their jobs, go home early and take maximum advantage of loose regulations affecting leave with pay. In addition, laxity characterises the upper levels of
bureaucracy (Salem 1973:90). “Although they (top bureaucrats) are expected to be leaders and pace-setters, their behaviour does not differ from that of other subordinates, except that they sign more documents.” (Al-Bilani 1966:258). Although there is in the Egyptian bureaucracy, a small minority of public servants who are committed to their jobs, the attitude of the majority toward hard work is very lax. According to Ayubi (1982:289), Egyptian public servants arrive late to their offices and by noon many of them are getting ready to go home. Moreover, a significant number may not go to work at all. Ayubi (1980:293) adds that only 15 per cent of all Egyptian employees arrive at their offices punctually, and most of these are in the security and order departments. The cost of lost working hours is estimated at 4 million Egyptian pounds every month. When at work, Egyptian public servants seemed to do everything other than attend to their jobs. On average, the Egyptian public servant works an estimated 20 minutes to 2 hours every working day (Ayubi 1980:293). Obviously, there is no culture of integrity, probity, and accountability, and no one seems to care much.

While supervisors vie to concentrate more power in their hands, subordinates in the Egyptian bureaucracy tend to shun responsibility and send all transactions to their superiors for clearance. According to Palmer, Yassin and Leila (1985:331–333), this avoidance of responsibility contributes to the concentration of authority in the hands of supervisors, lack of innovation among subordinates and refusal to take responsibility to settle a conflict or to take a risk. Subordinates seem to be satisfied with this situation and they do little to arouse the ire or suspicions of their supervisors. Moreover, more responsibility means more work. In the eyes of the subordinates, this is not justified because of their low salaries. Finally, the subordinates’ tendency to avoid responsibility may also be the result of poor training and a related lack of the necessary skills.

Lower employees and subordinates in the Saudi bureaucracy also avoid responsibility and decision-making; they are consumed with detailed and specific rules and regulations which do not allow for innovation (Al-Khaldi 1983:43; Alnimir & Palmer 1982:95–96). A survey conducted by Alnimir (1981:95) demonstrated that only 6.1 per cent of the respondents were willing to take risks in making decisions in their jobs. Not only do Saudi public servants wish to avoid conflict and maintain job security, they feel that their superiors will use their authority over them unfairly. Despite an effort by the government to improve their lot, Alnimir (1981:36) concludes that public servants in general, lack enthusiasm and the desire to innovate.
Their avoidance of responsibility is clearly illustrated by their unwillingness to move to areas where their skills are most needed, and their unwillingness to work at least temporarily in an uncomfortable rural environment; they are dissatisfied with the salary structure, they are often fatalistic; they prefer ascriptive values over achievement, and they suffer over the area of nonmaterial incentives, such as recognition, achievement, responsibility, advancement, working conditions and interpersonal relations (Al-Awaji 1971:70–75; Abussuud 1979:160; Alnimir 1981:98; Al-Khaldi 1983:42; Alnimir and Palmer 1982:97–98). An administrative culture in which a tendency to avoid responsibility flourishes is most unfavourable to the development of efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability among public servants.

3.2.5 Lack of Adequate Training

Finally training, which was intended to improve the performance of public servants in Arab countries, has ironically proved to be an obstacle to a culture of efficiency, effectiveness and accountability (Iskandar 1964:88–94; Bashir 1965:359–365; Nakib 1972:111; Ayubi 1977:54). For example, as a result of the vast revenues from oil, beginning in the early 1950s, government activity has increased steadily in Saudi Arabia, giving Saudi public servants responsibilities for which they were not prepared. Responding to Dr Ramzi's (1960:3) observation in 1960 that Saudi government employees were poorly qualified, inadequately trained and ill-educated the Saudi government established in 1961 the Institute of Public Administration to train Saudi public servants to carry out their responsibilities competently and accountably.

However, despite Saudi Arabia’s attempt to promote an educational culture in the training programs, the quality of government employees has not improved significantly (Tawati 1976:208–211). According to Al-Hegelan (1984:13), the lack of adequate training is still a major problem for the Saudi bureaucracy; most Saudi public servants still consider training a waste of time or a way to avoid responsibility. Training leave outside the country are not based on the needs of a civil servant or those of his administrative unit for a specific kind of training; rather they are granted as a form of compensation.

Several factors account for the poor quality of training among Saudi civil servants. First, early on in the '50s and throughout the '60s, methods of recruitment and selection were poor. As a result, many improperly trained
Saudis joined the bureaucracy. Second, government educational programmes have been mainly concerned with the number of schools and not with the quality of education. Third, because of the high salaries offered by the private sector, the government faces serious difficulties in recruiting qualified technical personnel. Fourth, despite the establishment of the Institute of Public Administration, there is still a shortage of educational and training institutions available to government officials at all levels. Finally, government managers discourage training and development of their employees, not only because such training usually requires an employee’s absence from an already understaffed unit, but because of possible future competition for their own positions.

Whatever the reasons, it should be clear that the prevalent administrative culture of poorly trained public employees will not help public servants in the Arab World carry out their responsibilities efficiently and accountably.

4 CONCLUSION

The prevalence of this informal administrative culture (El-Fathali & Chackerian 1983:193–209) imposes a heavy financial burden on Arab countries and hinders their economic, social and political development. Its possible replacement by a more positive administrative culture will depend a great deal upon the understanding of both Arab governments and Arab leaders that the currently prevalent administrative culture is embedded in the socio-economic, political, and behavioural settings of Arab societies. In other words, Arab bureaucracies are part of Arab societies. It would be difficult to reform the former without changing the latter. As early as 1947, Robert Dahl pointed out that “we cannot afford to ignore the relationship between public administration and its social settings.” Therefore, an administrative culture that is truly conducive to efficient, effective, and accountable public service in Arab societies will only be attained when the current administrative culture is modified. And since the latter is rooted in and nourished by the general Arab social settings within which bureaucracies have to operate, reform measures must be directed at guiding a new focus of socialization to be implemented both within Arab bureaucracies and among the Arab public at large, as well as at establishing and enforcing a code of conduct for public servants (for more detail see: Jabbra 1976; Jabbra & Jabbra 1983, 1989, 1997).

The socialisation approach recommended by Jabbra and Jabbra may be complemented and reinforced by Ayubi’s (1990:42–48) contingency
approach. Ayubi counsels Arab governments and scholars of public administration to begin by studying carefully the successes and failures of Arab bureaucracies, to compare their experiments to those of other developing societies and to dwell on and celebrate successes, for successes are contagious and inspiring and failures are disappointing and discouraging. According to Paul (1982:4–5), "the insights and understanding to be gained from high performers will be far more valuable than the incremental gains to be derived from further investigations of low performers about which we already know a great deal."

We are confident that the coordinated implementation of both approaches will provide Arab governments with a better opportunity to reform their bureaucracies, modify successfully and gradually replace their current administrative culture with a more effective one which would combine the best from both the traditional and the modern, the old and the new.

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