
The Ho Chi Minh City Party Committee Led Administrative Procedure Reform From 2000 to 2010

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ABSTRACT: In the renovation process, administrative procedure reform has been identified as a breakthrough aimed at improving the effectiveness and efficiency of state management and meeting the requirements of socio-economic development in the context of accelerating industrialization, modernization, and international integration. As a special urban area and a major economic center of the country, Ho Chi Minh City soon set out to innovate the way of administrative management, step by step building an open and transparent administration that serves the people.

During the 2000-2010 period, based on the thorough grasp of the Party Central Committee's policy on administrative reform, the Ho Chi Minh City Party Committee focused on leading and promoting administrative procedure reform through the implementation of the "one-stop shop" mechanism, simplifying the process of handling documents, publicizing administrative procedures, enhancing the responsibility of cadres and civil servants, and strengthening administrative discipline and order.

The process of leading administrative procedure reform by the City Party Committee has not only contributed to improving the quality of government operations, enhancing the investment environment, and creating favorable conditions for citizens and businesses, but also demonstrated the dynamism and creativity of the Ho Chi Minh City Party Committee in concretizing the Party's policies into the practical management of a special urban area. Despite achieving significant results, the administrative procedure reform process still reveals some limitations regarding consistency, implementation efficiency, and the quality of cadres and civil servants in some areas. From this practical experience, this article initially draws some lessons concerning the leadership role of the Ho Chi Minh City Party Committee in administrative procedure reform during the period of accelerated industrialization, modernization, and international integration.

KEYWORDS: Ho Chi Minh City Party Committee; administrative procedure reform; one-stop mechanism; urban government; history of the local Party organization.

INTRODUCTION

In the context of increasing economic and cultural globalization, administrative reform has become a global trend, a natural necessity, and a common effort of most countries, aiming to build a modern, effective, and flexible state administration. The main goal is to minimize cumbersome procedures, build an administrative system that takes the people as the center of service, and from there, constantly improve, develop, and perfect national administrative structures. In Vietnam, administrative reform is becoming a focus of the Party and State's efforts to realize the goal of building a socialist rule-of-law State, a State "of the people, by the people, and for the people". This is also a core factor to promote the development of the socialist-oriented market economy, achieve the goal of "a prosperous people, a strong nation, and a democratic, fair, and civilized society", while creating conditions to successfully implement national socio-economic development strategies.

The Resolution of the 13th National Party Congress clearly defined the country's development goals for the period up to 2030, in which it emphasized "building and perfecting a socialist rule-of-law State that is clean, strong, streamlined, effective, efficient, serves the people, and promotes the country's development"[8]. To realize this goal, Ho Chi Minh City has proactively implemented strong and comprehensive administrative reform programs, improving the efficiency of state management and meeting the increasing needs of citizens as well as businesses.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs historical, analytical, and comparative methods to examine the Ho Chi Minh City Party Committee's leadership of administrative reform during 2000-2010. The research draws primarily on official documents, including Party resolutions, government regulations, and administrative reform programs and decisions issued by Ho Chi Minh City authorities. Historical analysis is used to reconstruct the reform process, while analytical and comparative approaches assess its achievements, limitations, and changes across different stages. Quantitative data on administrative procedures, online public services, application processing, and citizen satisfaction are also examined to evaluate practical outcomes and draw lessons from the city's reform experience.

Research content

1. The current state of administrative reform in Vietnam

Administrative reform in Vietnam takes place in the context of the Communist Party of Vietnam's guidelines on political system innovation and state apparatus reform. The state administration is always linked to the process of building and rectifying the Party, as well as innovating the methods and content of the Party's leadership over the country in general and the administrative apparatus in particular. Administrative reform is not only the task of the state apparatus but also the responsibility of the entire socio-political system. The goal of administrative reform is to comprehensively reorganize the state administrative system, improve the effectiveness and efficiency of state agencies, and thereby better meet the requirements of socio-economic development in the new phase.

Right from the early years of the Renovation process, the Communist Party of Vietnam recognized the importance of administrative reform. The 6th National Party Congress in 1986 opened a new phase in the work of building, developing, and opening up the country. Implementing the resolution of the 6th Congress, the state apparatus was reorganized in a streamlined direction, reducing the number of focal points. However, the state apparatus remained too cumbersome, requiring further reform. The 7th National Party Congress passed a resolution defining the task of reforming the state apparatus, amending the Constitution, and improving the organization and operation of the National Assembly, the Government, and local authorities.

At the 3rd Plenum of the Party Central Committee (8th tenure) in 1997, the Resolution set out a number of major guidelines and solutions for administrative reform. In particular, one of the highlights was ensuring the implementation of democratization in socio-political life, promoting the people's right to mastery in building and protecting the State, while simultaneously strengthening the supervision of the activities of the State apparatus and cadres and civil servants. The Plenum also clearly stated: "Implement forms and measures to ensure the promotion of the people's right to mastery at the grassroots level, while also stipulating certain responsibilities assigned to groups of commune People's Council deputies according to each village (including hamlets and local subdivisions) such as organizing the construction and implementation of village conventions, and supervising village (ban, hamlet) heads" [4].

In the Resolution of the 9th National Party Congress (2001), the Party continued to affirm: "Build a democratic, clean, strong, and step-by-step modernized state administration" [5]. This resolution also put forward important solutions in administrative reform, including adjusting functions and improving the operating methods of the Government, clearly decentralizing and delegating authority, separating public administrative agencies from public service and career-oriented organizations, continuing to reform administrative procedures, and building a contingent of capable and qualified cadres and civil servants, while establishing discipline and order, and fighting against bureaucracy and corruption.

The Resolution of the 5th Plenum of the Party Central Committee (10th tenure) on accelerating administrative reform, improving the effectiveness and efficiency of state apparatus management (Resolution No. 17-NQ/TW dated August 1, 2007) defined the goal: "Accelerate administrative reform to continue building and perfecting the socialist rule-of-law State; build a democratic, clean, strong, and step-by-step modernized administration; have a contingent of cadres and civil servants with sufficient qualities and capabilities; have a system of state agencies operating effectively and efficiently, suitable to the socialist-oriented market economy institution and international economic integration; and meet the requirements for rapid and sustainable development of the country" [6].

Resolution No. 18-NQ/TW of the 6th Plenum of the Party Central Committee (12th tenure) set out the overall goal: "Continue to innovate and arrange the organizational structure of the political system to be streamlined, effective, and efficient, and suitable to the socialist-oriented market economy institution in order to strengthen the Party's leadership role; improve the effectiveness and efficiency of state management and the quality of operations of the Fatherland Front and socio-political organizations; and promote the people's right to mastery. Streamlining the payroll is associated with restructuring, improving quality, and effectively using the contingent of cadres, civil servants, and public employees; reducing regular expenditures and contributing to salary policy reform" [7]. This has created momentum, meeting the requirements of national development in the new situation, ensuring the interests of the people, and maximizing resources for the cause of industrialization and modernization of the country.

Over the past time, implementing the Party's guidelines and policies on administrative reform, the reform process has contributed significantly to the cause of renovation, opening up, and developing the socialist-oriented market economy. These achievements not only improved the lives of the majority of the people but also increased the people's trust in the leadership of the Party and the government, while consolidating the close relationship between the government and the people.

2. THE ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM PROCESS IN HO CHI MINH CITY FROM 2000-2010

2.1. Reform guidelines of the City Party Committee. Ho Chi Minh City

To improve the effectiveness and efficiency of state management, while ensuring fairness, transparency, and eliminating complex and overlapping administrative procedures that cause difficulties for citizens, administrative reform is a strategic task that needs to be implemented synchronously within the framework of comprehensive reform of the political system and reform of the state apparatus in general. At the 8th Plenum of the Party Central Committee (7th tenure), the Resolution affirmed: "Continue to build and perfect the State of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, with the focus on reforming the state administration one step further." Along with that, Government Resolution 38/CP, issued on May 4, 1994, set out solutions to "Reform administrative procedures one step further in resolving the work of citizens and organizations" [1]. These guidelines and policies of the Party and State affirm the pivotal role of administrative reform in the process of national development and construction, aiming to build an administration that serves the people, is transparent, and effective.

In the process of development, Ho Chi Minh City has always received special attention from central agencies as well as Party and State leadership levels. According to Politburo Resolution 01-NQ/TW in 1982, Ho Chi Minh City was identified as having an important strategic role, second only to the capital Hanoi. However, the city's potential and strengths, as well as the dynamic and creative spirit of its people, have not yet been fully exploited. The cause of this issue may stem from delays in state administrative reform, particularly in the reform of administrative procedures, which have not timely met the requirements and practical development needs of society.

Recognizing this, Ho Chi Minh City pioneered the implementation of administrative reform pilots starting in 1996, in Districts 1, 5, and Cu Chi District, with the "one-stop shop" model. This was the first time in the country that this administrative reform model was applied, demonstrating the city's determination to implement the administrative reform guidelines of the Party and the State. The city clearly recognizes its responsibility toward the cause of national economic and administrative reform, while also understanding that administrative reform is a complex and sensitive task, involving many areas of social life, requiring careful research time and alignment with reality.

Administrative reform needs to be implemented persistently, cautiously, and synchronously, with close coordination between management levels from top to bottom and vice versa. In this process, encouraging local and grassroots initiatives and experiments is extremely important. At the same time, it is necessary to clearly define breakthrough steps in each phase to promote reform activities, aiming to create sustainable development momentum for the city.

2.2. The status of administrative reform in Ho Chi Minh City from 2000-2010

To implement the Master Program on State Administrative Reform for the 2001-2010 period, according to the Prime Minister's Decision and the Resolutions of the 7th and 8th Ho Chi Minh City Party Congresses, the Ho Chi Minh City People's Committee issued Decision No. 119/2002/QĐ-UB dated October 24, 2002, on the Administrative Reform Program for the 2001-2005 period, along with Decision No. 117/2006/QĐ-UBND dated July 21, 2006, on the Plan for implementing the Administrative Reform Program for the 2006-2010 period, focusing on combating bureaucracy and improving the efficiency of public administrative management [2], [3], [9], [10].

Within the framework of the Project on simplifying administrative procedures for the 2007-2010 period, the City's Project 30 Working Group completed the review and inventory of existing administrative procedures. The total number of administrative procedures proposed for simplification was 1,762, reaching a rate of 72.6% compared to the target requirement of at least 30%. Specifically, 663 procedures (accounting for 27.34%) were kept unchanged, 874 procedures (accounting for 36.04%) were amended or supplemented, 182 procedures (accounting for 7.5%) were replaced, and 706 procedures (accounting for 29.11%) were abolished or cancelled. Among these, 264 procedures fell under the city's authority to issue, accounting for 14.91% of the total number of procedures. Of these, 68 procedures were proposed for amendment, 29 procedures were replaced, and 167 procedures that were no longer necessary were abolished.

Ho Chi Minh City is a pioneering locality in the country in implementing and testing the "one-stop shop" administrative mechanism at departments, sectors, as well as at the ward, commune, and town levels. All departments and sectors of the city, 24/24 urban and rural districts, and 322/322 wards, communes, and townships have applied the "one-stop shop" mechanism to resolve administrative procedures related to individuals, organizations, and businesses, in accordance with the prescribed authority. To ensure transparency and efficiency, most areas applying the "one-stop shop" mechanism have developed administrative procedures with detailed instructions. All processes, procedures, and timeframes for resolving work for citizens and businesses are publicly posted on guidance boards at administrative agencies, and simultaneously posted on the official websites of functional agencies.

Ho Chi Minh City has actively applied information technology to administrative management work, contributing to improving the efficiency of resolving administrative procedures. Specifically, the City has issued 51 decisions approving 936 internal processes to reform and optimize administrative procedures. At the same time, the City implemented 454 administrative procedures with level 3 online public services and 384 procedures with level 4 online public services, thereby promoting digital transformation in public administrative fields.

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Along with that, changing the working methods of the contingent of cadres, civil servants, public employees, and workers has been implemented effectively, ensuring flexibility and suitability to the requirements of COVID-19 prevention and control work. During the year, the City received a total of 12.37 million administrative procedure dossiers, with an on-time resolution rate reaching 99.3%. This result has contributed to increasing the satisfaction level of citizens and organizations, as the satisfaction rate regarding the attitude and service quality of cadres and civil servants reached 98.86%, measured through satisfaction assessment devices at administrative agencies.

Ho Chi Minh City continues to affirm its determination to successfully implement Digital Transformation and implement Resolution 98/2023 of the National Assembly. The city is focusing on widely deploying the 5G network, after the Ministry of Information and Communications granted permission, while also promoting the development of 5G applications and services, the Internet of Things (IoT), and artificial intelligence applications to serve the development of digital government, digital economy, and digital society. One of the important goals is to review and upgrade information technology infrastructure in state agencies, ensuring continuity, stable connection, and information security from the city level down to wards, communes, and towns.

One of the important initiatives is the launch of the "City Citizen" application on mobile platforms, helping citizens interact more effectively and conveniently with the government. The city is also determined to deploy and operate information technology applications on a synchronous, continuous, and unified digital platform. In particular, the City will continue to develop new digital platforms to improve the quality of public services and effectively apply data in management and administration.

In this regard, two key areas will be prioritized: the land information system and construction permitting, aimed at resolving large and complex volumes of applications while meeting the needs of citizens. The City will deploy digital transformation and electronic document storage platforms, while simultaneously building a comprehensive city data analysis platform to enrich and effectively exploit the existing data warehouse. Finally, the City will also develop digital assistants to support civil servants in administrative work and digital assistants to help citizens access and use public services quickly and conveniently.

2.3. Lessons learned

Successful administrative reform models in Ho Chi Minh City have had a positive impact, creating a strong ripple effect on many localities across the country. The results achieved from administrative reform programs in general, as well as from successful pilot projects in Ho Chi Minh City, have contributed significantly to realizing the guidelines of the Party and the Government on national administrative reform.

Administrative reform is a long and complex process; from the implementation reality in Ho Chi Minh City, a number of important lessons can be drawn:

First, strengthen the decisive leadership and direction of the Party and the State; administrative reform must have the attention and joint efforts of the entire political system and the regular direction, administration, and supervision of all levels. The inspection work of leaders at all levels and sectors is carried out regularly, associated with strictly handling violations and immediately rectifying the operations of each agency and unit. Besides that, the synchronization of guidelines, policies, and the legal system of the State from the central to local levels will help reform initiatives be implemented successfully and achieve high efficiency.

Second, administrative reform needs to have clearly defined goals and implementation roadmaps, consistent with the national development orientations stated in the Resolution of the 12th National Party Congress. In particular, this goal must aim at building and perfecting a socialist rule-of-law state that is transparent, strong, streamlined, and operates effectively and efficiently, serving the people and contributing to the sustainable development of the country. Administrative reform must meet the increasingly high demands of citizens, businesses, and society as a whole, especially in the context of the 4.0 Industrial Revolution and the trend of increasingly deep international integration, creating new challenges but also opportunities for administrative reform to achieve optimal efficiency.

Third, focus on administrative procedure reform and transparency, linking administrative reform with digital transformation to minimize cumbersome and complex procedures, while enhancing transparency in administrative activities. Administrative reform follows the motto of taking citizens and businesses as the center of service in a more substantive and effective way; promoting data connection and sharing, ensuring "unity from top to bottom, seamless coordination both vertically and horizontally" for the common good, for the national interest, and for the benefit of the people.

Fourth, put an end to the state of avoiding responsibility, not daring to advise, not daring to propose by a section of cadres and civil servants, and pushing responsibility in some agencies, ministries, and sectors, between the central and local levels. Decisively do not handle tasks that are not within one's authority, while not pushing tasks that are within one's authority to higher levels. Strictly handle cadres and civil servants who have not fulfilled their responsibilities in performing official duties; besides that, encourage, protect, motivate, and promptly reward those who do well, dare to think, dare to do, and dare to take responsibility for the common work.

Fifth, focus on training and developing the contingent of cadres and civil servants in terms of qualifications, capacity, qualities, and responsibility for the people, for the country, and for the legitimate rights and interests of citizens and businesses. Administrative reform cannot succeed if the contingent of cadres and civil servants is not fully trained in skills, qualities, and a

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mindset of serving citizens. Improving the capacity of this contingent will help ensure that the reform process takes place smoothly and brings high efficiency.

Lessons learned from the administrative reform process in Ho Chi Minh City can be drawn from both successes and challenges in implementing reform initiatives. One of the important lessons is the determination and long-term vision of the local government, when always focusing on improving management efficiency, enhancing the quality of public services, and meeting the needs of citizens. From these experiences, Ho Chi Minh City not only completes its administrative reform goals but is also a model for other localities across the country to learn from and apply.

CONCLUSION

In more than two decades of implementing administrative reform (from 2000 to 2010), Ho Chi Minh City has achieved many outstanding results in improving the efficiency of state management, improving the investment environment, and meeting the increasingly diverse needs of citizens and businesses. The application of information technology, the implementation of the "one-stop-shop" model, the simplification of administrative procedures, along with the construction of digital platforms serving public management, have contributed to optimizing the quality of public services and enhancing the experience of citizens and businesses in transactions with the government. Although the results achieved are noteworthy, in the current context, the requirements for administrative reform continue to develop and demand more creative and flexible efforts. Administrative reform is not only an urgent need but also a decisive factor for the sustainable development of Ho Chi Minh City in the next phase, when the requirements for efficiency, transparency, and quality of public services are increasingly high.

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