

The Raffles Review

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Gain by the Grain



SOURCE

Working with the Grain: *Integrating Governance and Growth in Development Strategies* (2014) by Brian Levy.

KEY POINT

Ditch grandiose ideas and blue prints, focus on incremental and organic reforms. Cumulative changes will lead to better and lasting progress.

BIG IDEAS

- **Go organic:** Stop attempts to transplant seeds of best practices across countries. Work with local realities and let institutions develop from organic interaction between governance and growth.
- **Test the soil:** Countries may have 'dominant' or 'competitive' polities with 'personal' or 'impersonal' rules of game within them. Virtuous circles unfold differently across each country trajectory based on how constraints and incentives of major players align.
- **Work with the Grain:** See development as an evolving, interdependent system and institutions as path dependent. Identify reform priorities, make trade-offs and look for entry points to unleash virtuous circles.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

- **Public service** plays differing but equally crucial roles in early stages of both 'dominant' and 'competitive' trajectories:
 - Where 'dominant' leaders committed to development emerge, a strong public service can initiate and sustain growth that may lead to democratization.
 - In clientilistic 'competitive' polities, public servants may need to become public entrepreneurs to nurture islands of effectiveness within a broader sea of dysfunction.
- **Public Service Reforms** will be incremental in early stages of both trajectories. Recommends: *Public Management lite* where reforms focus on specific sectors, agencies, locales and sub-set of civil servants than looking for perfect windows of opportunity.
- **Public servants** can leverage upon community engagement, PPPs and participation to nurture horizontal accountability mechanisms. These can create upward pressure for democracy in 'dominant' settings and islands of effectiveness in 'competitive' settings.

The Raffles Review
aims to ruffle your thinking!

This weekly offering summarises insights on public service matters to challenge assumptions and question the status quo.