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Civil Service Reforms in India: Policy and Perspectives

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Abstract

Civil Service Reforms (CSR) mean different things to different stakeholders in India. There has been a dearth of studies on CSR from a holistic perspective. This study attempts to fill this gap by ascertaining views of stakeholders on CSR in India. It adopted purposive and convenient sampling. Primary data was collected from a sample of 27 respondents that includes civil servants, civil service aspirants, member of a Civil Society Organisation (CSO), member of Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), former member of the Second Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) and policy expert. Secondary data was collected from the relevant books on CSR, articles in peer reviewed journals and web sources. Thematic analysis was adopted for data analysis through Axial Coding. Major findings of the study: Civil service in India came under the increasing pressure to adapt itself from being a 'commander' of the public services to that of 'partner' with CSOs and private sector; and from being 'generalist' to that of 'specialist'. Yet, it is not able to cope with these demands. On the other hand, State's policy on CSR has been incremental. The study finds gaps between policy on CSR and expectations of stakeholders.

Keywords: Civil service reforms; Stakeholders; Perspective; Thematic analysis; Transformative.

Introduction

Civil service is one of the most admired as well as criticised institutions of governance in public administration. It played the role of a 'social guardian' representing universal interest of the state by exhibiting its organisational leadership (Das, 1998). However, it has come under intense scrutiny by public administration scholars in recent times. It has been viewed as self-interested and inefficient; and more as a problem than a solution. Moreover, it was argued that its inefficiency is responsible for poor implementation of development projects both in developed countries as well as developing countries (World Bank, 1989).

During 1980s, search for better governance in both the developed as well as developing countries

including in Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia led to the reorientation of roles of state and civil service across the countries. For instance, World Bank in its Report entitled: '*The State in a Changing World*' (1997) reiterates that an effective state is essential for sustainable development of a country. Further, it argues that state can no longer act as sole provider, rather it should act as a facilitator and regulator. The report identifies 'civil service' as one of the key institutions and suggests improving its capability by re-engineering public institutions (World Bank, 1997). State and civil service have been affected by both external and internal factors. Externally, globalisation and neoliberal policies brought fundamental shifts in state along with civil service. Internally, increased expectations from citizens and Information Communication and Technology (ICT) revolution altered the manner in which civil service delivers

services. It is not exaggerating to say that no other institution in the twenty-first century has undergone as many changes as civil service underwent (Peters and Wright, 1998).

CSR in India can be located in the context of globalisation and governance reforms. CSR were introduced under the auspices of donor agencies like World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) that gave inputs to orient civil services towards market economy. Government of India (GoI) responded positively to the agenda of good governance promoted by these agencies. India had to introduce Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) in the early 1990s under the guidance of the WB, to overcome the economic crisis impending due to Balance of Payment problems. Under the influence of the managerial approach advocated by these agencies, India introduced cut back management in public sector. These reforms aimed at managing the public sector by avoiding unnecessary subsidies, which will have huge bearing on the economy. For instance, Fifth Pay Commission and Subsidies Committee recommended downsizing and improving the efficiency of civil service. The Chief Ministers' Conference in 1997 emphasised a SMART (Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsive and Transparent) governance. Several states [1] also introduced governance reforms, notably in the United Andhra Pradesh.

Besides, GoI's documents such as National Human Development Report of 2001 (GoI, 2002) and Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-07) underscored significance of governance for sustainable human development (Choudhary, 2007). Subsequently, governance occupied significance in the party manifestos in the parliamentary election of 2004. Congress led United Progressive Alliance (UPA-I) included 'the institutional reforms' as the underlying theme in its National Common Minimum Program (NCMP) (GoI, 2004 a), and fought elections on a promise of good governance in the country. Under governance reforms, it was emphasised to enhance efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability of civil service. In economic domain, the reforms included the 'rolling back of the state' from its commitment towards welfare of the citizens, through distribution of goods. Further, civil service reforms got momentum as they have been given legitimacy through setting up of Second ARC in 2005.

Problem

Since mid-1970s, public image of civil servants in

India began to change, particularly in terms of their adherence to the ideals of civil service, such as impartiality, neutrality and integrity. There has been an increasing politicisation and the discontent of citizens with civil servants as they failed to improve service delivery (Seminar, 1973). Rao & Ali (1990) located decadence of civil service values in the emerging trends in administrative culture of India. They explicate that India has several bureaucracies working side by side with apparent hostility. According to them, some of the ambitious civil servants who are loyal to the political leadership became closer to the political power structure. Resultantly, the selection of competent senior officers for the highest positions of responsibility has suffered. The officers who have traditional bureaucratic commitment were relegated to the lower levels of administration and got demoralised.

The changing administrative culture had its roots in Mrs. Indira Gandhi's rule in the end of 1960s. It was reported that during her rule, civil service was unable to implement socialist goals of the Congress Party after its split in 1969 [2]. It was perceived by the Congress party that the neutral civil service can't meet the requirements of social and economic change along socialist lines envisaged by it. Mrs. Gandhi saw civil service as a hindrance to meet the political goals of the government. Under these circumstances, she was compelled to call for a 'committed civil service'. This has been interpreted as call for commitment of civil service to the political party that is in power [3]. Resultantly, civil service gained political image despite the fact that civil servants offered only professional advice (Mathur, 2008). The shift in civil service, that is from being professional to loyal, has been considered a watershed in the trajectory of civil service. Singh (1998) outlines that politicisation of civil service has eroded the qualities of independent thinking and expression of free, frank and fair views by civil servants. Civil servants had to succumb to political pressures and it was taken advantage by the politicians for their personal gains.

The need to reform civil service was articulated by scholars in the 1990s. According to Paranjape (1996), civil servants, by and large, remain the same-hierarchical, insensitive, sluggish and monopolistic despite the changes that took place in most business and professionals. They failed to emerge as an agent of change in the changing socio-economic scenario. Following the British legacy, civil servants in India, as Paranjape argues, maintained **distance** with the public **by** following elaborate rules and regulations scrupulously. This **discouraged** the honest and conscientious civil servants from genuinely

committing themselves to the goals of development and social welfare-areas where discretionary powers need to be exercised rather than just a strict implementation of rules and regulations.

Sundaram (1997) added that credibility of civil service among the public has been eroding due to growing unholy nexus between politicians, civil servants and criminals. Besides, there has been low level of honesty, transparency and accessibility to administration. The honest and committed civil servants are outnumbered by officials characterised by indifference to public, undue emphasis on procedures and regulations, lack of quality and promptitude, tendency to corruption, and lack of accountability for results. This is further being aggravated by the age-old legal and regulatory systems governing decision making, sanction of funds, award of tenders, approval for expenditure and creation of posts, civil service systems. On the other hand, demoralisation and lack of incentives, political interference and poor work environment failed civil servants at different levels in ensuring proper and responsive performance of assigned functions, and adherence to the law.

Singh (2000) explicates the changing needs of citizens are not served due to traditional work-culture. In addition to this, the out-dated and out-of-place assumption behind Weber's model does not stand confrontation with reality on the ground in Indian Context. With all these conditions, the public image of the bureaucracy in India has been below expectations. A survey conducted as part of the National Election Study 1996, reveals that the bureaucracy was relegated to the last two positions in the index of popular trust in institutions [4] (Agrawal & Vittal, 2005). This survey portrays civil service in poor light.

Rao (2002) cited that rewards for high performance are not available to civil servants, which de-motivates the honest, hard working and meritorious officers. He contends that punishments mechanism for erring officials has become inoperative as Article 311 of the 'constitution of india' provides high degree of protection. This purportedly led to the lethargy among civil servants. The prescribed procedures are lengthy and time consuming and weighed heavily in favour of the official proceeded against. During the proceedings the erring officials can approach the administrative tribunals which can and do grant stay orders. The disciplinary authority has to defend itself in these forums; therefore it tends to avoid getting embroiled in such complicated processes. As a result there has been hardly any penalty for non-performance and dereliction of duty. This proves to

be advantageous to a large extent with the erring official.

Amidst this background, the role of civil service in India has come under scrutiny. Several attempts were made by the different governments to rectify these aspects. Problems in civil service have become a major impetus for the government to initiate CSR. Several committees have been appointed to study the problems in civil service and suggest recommendations. Major attempt among them is the setting up of First Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) in 1966. Civil service reforms aim to generate positive qualities in civil service, such as efficiency, effectiveness, dynamism, innovativeness and forward looking character (Dubhashi, 1985). However, the impact of reforms has been incremental. For instance, the analysis of administrative problems is confined to structural aspects of administration. For instance, the structure of administration processes and procedures of work have remained still intact, except that cosmetic changes have been made here and there. Moreover, the outlook of civil service in dealing with citizens had little impact on the lives of the common citizens (Mathur, as cited in Mehta 2000).

In tune with the inputs given by donor agencies, Fifth Central Pay Commission (1994-97) recommended cutting the existing central government staff by 30 percent (Maheswari, 2005). BN Yugandhar committee (GoI, 2003) made an important observation that training imparted to the officers was inadequate. The committee observed that the incentive structure in government is identified to be weak and insufficient; and promotion is not largely used for motivation. The Second Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) was appointed in 2005 under the United Progress Alliance (UPA-I) regime. It was given the mandate to identify the required changes in civil service. Second ARC suggested replacing the hierarchies with team work and introducing Key Performance Targets. It also suggested a shift from output to outcome mode so as to make civil servants to be held accountable for the provision of outputs (Second ARC, 2007a).

Civil service as an instrument of implementation of public policies, appears to have not yet adjusted to the new paradigm of governance and continues to act in a mode reminiscent of an era gone by. Despite constituting several committees and implementing reforms performance of civil servants has not improved. A study by Hong Kong-based Political and Economic Risk Consultancy Limited, in 2009 revealed that working with Indian civil service is a 'slow and painful process. Another study by same organisation in 2012, ranked civil servants in India high on the 'red tape', that is, 9.21 points out of 10 (Times of In-

dia, 2009). Besides, the raising level of corruption among civil servants has become a major concern. India has been ranked 94 in the Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index for the year 2012 (Transparency International, 2013). Increasing level of corruption and indecisive civil servants seemed to have led to low growth rates and 'policy paralysis' (The Hindu, May 2013).

Innumerable committees and commissions have been constituted to reform civil service, yet it remained where it was. CSR are envisaged to rectify the anomalies in civil service. They aim to protect the autonomy of civil service in its functioning and freeing it from the clutches of political leaders. But reforming civil service remained as one of the foremost challenges of good governance in India today (Das, 2010). Despite the commissioning of several committees to reform civil service in India, its efficiency and capacity to deliver services appear to be minimal. Reforms mean different things to different stakeholders. Studies were held by civil servants (Das, 1998) and Government of India (GoI, 2010) to ascertain the views of civil servants on the CSR. Studies on civil service reforms by the Government, both ARCs adopted a single perspective (top-down); and appear to miss a holistic perspective that comprises of views of the diverse perspectives of

stakeholders. In this study I attempted to examine CSR from the perspective of diverse stakeholders in India. I examined the changing role of civil service in post-globalised era and its implications for implementation of CSR.

Method

Participants

Researcher adopted purposive and convenient sampling. Sample was drawn from Assam, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Telangana, and Uttar Pradesh. The researcher collected data from the sample respondents based on their accessibility (Marshall, p.523). They fit into purposeful sampling in the sense that they were selected to fulfil the objectives of the study. These samples were selected to elicit the in-depth information (Schatzman and Strauss, 1971 and Patton 1990 as cited in Coyne, 1997, p.624). There is no agreement on scholars about the required sample for qualitative sampling. For instance, Crosswell (as cited in Marshall et al, 2013) recommended at least 20 to 30 interviews for qualitative research study. Initially a sample of 58

Table 1: Respondents' Characteristics

Sample No.	Name*	Age	Gender	Category	Duration (minutes)
1	Laxman	30	Male	IAS Trainee	35
2	Vikrant	29	Male	IAS Trainee	30
3	Sudhakar	27	Male	IAS Trainee	25
4	Subba Rao	50	Male	IAS	25
5	Samson	61	Male	IAS	50
6	Nikhil Chakraborty	31	Male	IAS	40
7	Aparna	29	Female	IAS	30
8	Ramanamurthy	35	Male	IAS	20
9	Sourabh	67	Male	Retired IAS	20
10	Chakradhar	74	Male	Retired IAS	45
11	Shankar	76	Male	Retired IAS	55
12	Gurucharan	32	Male	IPS	50
13	Sadanand	29	Male	IPS	45
14	Vikas	70	Male	Retired IFS	90
15	Kishore Babu	73	Male	Retired IFS	30
16	Bhubnesh	76	Male	Retired IFS	50
17	Susmita	31	Female	IFS	25
18	Abhinav	33	Male	IRTS	40
19	Surender	27	Male	CSA	35
20	Mohammad Hussain	27	Male	CSA	50
21	Harmand Khasria	24	Male	CSA	25
22	Ajitesh Gupta	28	Male	CSA	40
23	Arpit Chadda	31	Male	CSA	35
24	Anand	66	Male	Member of UPSC	55
25	Ajay Siswal	59	Male	Second ARC Member	25
26	Viswajit Dutta	52	Male	Civil Society Organization Member	50
27	Rajat Kumar	76	Male	Policy Expert	30

Note. IAS = Indian Administrative Service, IFS = Indian Foreign Service, IPS = Indian Police Service, IRTS = Indian Railways Traffic Service, CSA=Civil Service Aspirant

*All names are pseudonyms.

was planned, but only 27 respondents have agreed to be interviewed. Table 1 shows the participants' characteristics.

Interview

Primary data was collected by interviewing Indian Administrative Service (IAS) [5] officers and allied service officers, civil service aspirants, member of a Civil Society Organisation, member of Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) [6], former member of the Second ARC and policy expert. In-depth Interview was taken from respondents to get their detailed views on civil service and how to go about the reforms. Expert interview was carried with a prominent person who is well-informed about the CSR.

Data Analysis

The researcher adopted thematic analysis, a method by which data was read and re-read again. By the identification of words that are repeated analysis is attempted and the most important issues in relation to the objective of the study get tested using Open Coding. Analysis is done using Axial Coding (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Results

Participants were well versed with the reforms in civil service. They offered researcher insights based on their experience. Several themes emerged over times as the data analysis proceeded. The Superordinate themes that emerged are: re-engineering of civil services, selection process of civil services, building the capacity of civil servants, designing performance appraisal mechanism, politicisation of

Table 2: Super ordinate themes and their sub-themes with specific illustrative quotations

Superordinate Theme	Sub-theme	Illustrative quotations
Reengineering of civil services	Distancing from goals of welfare state	'Of late, civil service has drifted from the ideals of welfare state; and moved from being pro-poor to the pro-rich.'
	Status quo	'I have not observed any significant change in civil services ever since I joined...'
	Lack of accountability	'Over a period of time....civil servants have become risk averse and unaccountable.'
Selection Process of Civil Service	Inclination to Managerialism	'...UPSC is inclined to New Public Management in recruitment.'
	Lack of transparency	'... whole process of recruitment is a hoax. Nobody knows how a candidate is selected.'
	Ineffective method	'Current CSAT pattern tests the aptitude of a prospective civil servant, but not his/her mind set.'
	Social Inclusion	'... Constitutionally stipulated reservations will not affect the quality of civil service, therefore they should be continued.'
Building the capacity of civil servants	Selection of the young candidates	'I think, young graduates should be recruited in civil service, for it is easier to induct them into service.'
	Outdated and irrelevant Content	'Training at LBSNAA is a kind of punishment.'
	Formalism	'Personally, I feel that best training should be provided to the trainees by the best faculty.'
	Lack of specialist orientation.	'..There is a general disinterest among trainees towards any session of training ...' 'Training period is taken as a paid holiday.'
Designing Performance Appraisal Mechanism	Lack of specialist orientation.	'The heyday of 'generalist' civil service is over.'
	Delinking Promotion with performance	'I think, the career based civil service can no longer work.'
	Absence of 360 degrees performance evaluation	'There is subjectivity in evaluating the performance of civil servant.' 'I feel that 360 degrees performance evaluation should be introduced in place of age-old Annual Confidential Reports (ACRs)...'
Politicisation of Civil Service	Violation of 'neutrality' principle	'Gone are days, a civil servant is neutral and impartial.'
	Transfers as a means of punishment	'...These politicians... use transfers to punish the honest and upright officers!'
Leading the reforms for change	Lack of Vision	'I don't think the political leaders do have any clear stand on reforms!'
	Resistance to Change	'How can implementation of reforms be successful when that responsibility is given to civil servants?'

civil services, and leading the change. These super-ordinate themes with their respective sub themes are listed in Table 2.

Reengineering of civil services

All respondents portrayed civil servants in India in a manner unexpected from them. Some responses regarding civil servants are even shocking. They view that civil servants are lacking aptitude to serve the public, self-serving, *status quoist*, risk averse, dysfunctional, manipulative and poor in service delivery and implementation of public policies.

Distancing from the goals of welfare state

Majority of the respondents emphasised that the civil servants have distanced themselves from the goals of welfare state i.e. promotion of social and economic wellbeing of the citizens. It was striking to note an observation made by a respondent:

'Of late, civil service has drifted from the ideals of welfare state; and moved from being pro-poor to the pro-rich.'

Status quo

It was reiterated by all the respondents that civil servants have become outdated in contemporary times and they are not willing to adapt themselves to new changes in society. It was expressed that they work in an old fashion without realising the shift in their role from being commander to facilitator. It was said that civil servants rely excessively on paper work without taking advantage of ICTs. The pessimism expressed by a respondent about civil service is illustrated here:

'I have not observed any significant change in civil service ever since I joined it'

Lack of accountability

Majority of the respondents emphasised that civil servants do not have an aptitude to serve the public. They say it was reflected in the poor implementation of welfare programmes. Complacency, ineffective monitoring of their performance, pursuance of patron-client relations, self-seeking nature have been cited as critical factors contributing to the lack of accountability among civil servants.

'Over a period of time....civil servants have become status-quoist, risk averse and unaccountable.'

Selection Process of Civil Services

Majority of the young respondents were not confident of the selection process adopted by UPSC. They cited that selection method was ineffective, biased and unfair.

Inclination to managerialism

Majority of the respondents were of the view that UPSC adopts an approach that favors the candidates hailing from urban areas and the socially advantageous sections.

'...UPSC is inclined to follow New Public Management (NPM) in recruitment.'

Lack of transparency

The trainees who were part of the study were not confident of selection process of civil service. They responded firmly that UPSC is not transparent in conducting CSAT. They felt that exam pattern favours graduates from science and engineering streams and those who can speak English. One common apprehension among the young respondents is about unwanted secrecy maintained by UPSC. The exasperation of one respondent is given below:

'...whole process of UPSC recruitment is a hoax. Nobody knows how a candidate is selected for a service.'

Ineffective method

Against the popular notion, majority of the respondents said that current Civil Service Aptitude Test (CSAT) could not bring any change in the attitude of civil servants. According to them, this pattern tests the aptitude of the prospective civil servant, but not their mindset.

'Current CSAT pattern tests aptitude of the prospective civil servants, but not their mind set.'

Social Inclusion

Almost all the respondents supported the continuation of reservations in the selection of civil services. They firmly said that continuation of reservations would expand the social base of civil service and play the level playing field for all the socially disadvantaged sections.

'...Constitutionally stipulated reservations will not affect the quality of civil service, and they should be continued.'

Selection of the young candidates

Majority of the respondents viewed that young

candidates should be recruited between 21-24 years. It was justified on the ground that it is easier to mould and shape up the mind of the young recruits than those who cross more than 24 years.

'I think, young graduates should be recruited in civil service, for it is easier to induct them into service.'

Building the Capacity of Civil Servants

Training is meant for both the individual and organisational growth. Majority of the respondents were dissatisfied with the current efforts made by the GoI towards building the capacity of civil servants. They felt that these efforts are not sufficient to address the problems, such as, outdated and irrelevant content, formalism, lack of specialist orientation. These sub-themes are discussed here:

Outdated and irrelevant content

Majority of the respondents explained that training imparted to civil service probationers at Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA) is not relevant in contemporary times. It is to be noted that young trainees found the contents of the training module is repetitive with more focus on theory than practice. They view that training modules should be updated. Besides they observed that the trainers (faculty at LBSNAA) are incompetent.

'Training at LBSNAA is a kind of punishment.'

'Personally, I feel that best training should be provided to the trainees by the best faculty.'

Formalism

In-service civil servants elaborated that civil servants do not take training seriously. It was due to lack of enthusiasm and aptitude for undergoing training.

'...There's a general disinterest among trainees towards any session of training...'

'Training period is taken as a paid holiday.'

Lack of specialist orientation

Majority of the respondents viewed that current training does not make civil servants specialists in their field. Moreover, it does not cater to the needs of citizens in contemporary society.

'The heyday of 'generalist' civil service is over.'

Designing Performance Appraisal Mechanism

Performance appraisal is a process tool by which contribution of an officer is assessed in a stipulated year. It has been revisited and is regarded as an important area of reform. De-linking performance with promotions, biased performance appraisal and absence of 360 degree performance are the areas that need intervention by the government. These subthemes are discussed under the super-ordinate themes as shown below.

De-linking performance with promotions

Majority of the respondents explained that promotions of civil servants are based on seniority, but not their performance. This, according to them, would discourage the hardworking civil servants. They see it as against the principle of meritorious civil service.

'I think, career based civil service can no longer work'

Absence of 360 degree performance

Surendranath Committee (GoI, 2003) outlines that performance and qualities of a civil servant must be evaluated by peers, subordinates and clients. This is known as 360 degrees evaluation. Majority of the respondents said that current performance appraisal does not have such mechanism. They also expressed that it is the tendency of reviewing officer to promote his/her subordinates based on their personal relations rather than their performance.

'There is subjectivity in evaluating the performance of civil servants.'

'I feel that 360 degrees performance evaluation should be introduced in place of age- old Annual Confidential Reports (ACRs)...'

Politicisation of Civil Services

Almost all the respondents have expressed that the incidence of politicization is high in civil services. It is a major area of reforms. Violation of 'neutrality' principle and transfers as a means of punishment have been cited as major factors contributing to such phenomenon. Discussion on these subthemes is figuring in separately.

Violation of principle of neutrality

Majority of the respondents viewed that constitutional principle of civil service, that is,

neutrality underwent radical change. Civil servants, as they opined, are showing allegiance to a particular political party and its representatives in contemporary times. The blurring of role of civil servant between policymaking and policy implementation is a contributing factor.

'Gone are days, a civil servant is neutral and impartial'.

Transfers as a means of punishment

Most of the respondents explicated that the political executives use transfers as a means to intimidate the sincere officers. They are of the view that there is no objectivity in postings and transfers of civil servants as it is left to the whims and fancies of a political executive.

'... these politicians... use transfers to punish honest and upright officers!'

Leading the Change

Almost all the respondents explained that implementation of CSR in India has been slow and

incremental. They attributed it to lack of vision and resistance to change from civil servants.

Lack of vision

Majority of the respondents reported that political leaders do not have a vision to implement CSR. They perceived that political parties do not have commitment towards reforming civil service.

'I don't think political leaders do have any clear stand on reforms!'

Resistance to change

Respondents have expressed that there has been resistance to change within civil service. It was attributed to the fact that reforms will affect the vested interests of civil servants.

'How can we expect successful implementation of reforms when that responsibility is given to civil servants?'

Fig. 1: Perspectives on Civil Service Reforms



Discussion

Discussion on the results can be diagrammatically explained as shown in the Figure 1. Respondents, some being civil servants, felt that civil servants departed from the welfare goals stipulated by the constitution of India. A common perception expressed by them is that people are alienated from the governance processes. A visible trend, as mentioned by them, is that civil servants do have a soft corner for the rich and business groups. This calls for revisiting the principles of civil service.

Majority of the respondents said that civil servants wield enormous power for self-perpetuation. They perceived civil servants to be resistant to change. Civil servants were criticised for carrying colonial mindset with "I know everything" attitude. They attribute this to their complacent nature due to permanent nature of job. They felt that civil servants' performance has to be assessed against the fixed targets, without which they should not be allowed to continue in service. With a lot of anguish, they expressed that a non-performing civil servant should be asked to take retirement or to take a break. Though Surendranath Committee (Gol, 2003) and Hota Committee (Gol, 2004 b) emphasised fixing targets, the government has not come up with a clear Performance Appraisal Mechanism to assess achievement of targets by civil servants.

A respondent who was the former UPSC member told that current pattern of CSAT is biased towards a particular stream of education, say, sciences, engineering and management. Some of civil service aspirants also said that it excludes candidates from the rural background and socially disadvantaged sections. This trend is against Kothari Committee's (Gol, 1976) observation which emphasises the need for rural bias for civil servants.

There was difference of views among the respondents on particular aspect of reform. While young respondents (both civil servants and civil service aspirants) are sceptical of recent reforms in the selection of civil servants, aged respondents including the senior civil servants consider selection process as appropriate. According to them, lack of efficiency in civil services is not due to selection method; rather it is due to the administrative culture that prevails. Good number of respondents felt that selection process can not bring positive changes in the attitude of civil servants as long as rigid structures and procedures remain unchanged. It was perceived that CSAT tests the ability of candidate to become civil servant alone, but not their attitude towards

public service. Respondents were of the view that young civil servants should be recruited to civil service so that they can easily be sensitized to the plight of poor as they will be open to new ideas.

Respondents said that training is not as challenging as was the case earlier. They mentioned that contents of foundational course at LBSNAA need to be improved so that it would cater to the needs of contemporary society. They categorically said that curriculum should be updated; competent faculty have to be recruited at LBSNAA and training methods have to be made relevant and flexible. For instance, a respondent objected to compulsory horse riding as he finds it irrelevant in contemporary times as much of commutation takes place by means of road transport. Young trainees firmly expressed that trainees should be taken to the nearby villages (in place of far distant places) during field trips. Perhaps, this may give greater exposure to have better understanding of the society. It is worth noting that more than five decades ago, First ARC recommended strengthening of training for civil services (Gol, 1969). Yet, one can observe from the finding that the training requirements have not been fulfilled.

It was found that there is no relation between the training and promotion in the later stages. Assessment of the impact of the training calls for a review. In 2010, the researcher under the Right to Information (RTI) requested for information from the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) on whether there is an assessment made by the Government. It was sought to know about the outcomes of the training imparted to civil servants and. The Information Officers said that they did not maintain any record regarding this query. It shows negligence in the response pattern of bureaucracy in India.

It is interesting to note that almost all respondents have agreed with the idea of reservations in civil services. In contrast to the popular notion in society, respondents viewed that reservations will not affect the quality of civil service. Even some of them said that reservations should be continued.

Respondents viewed that the organisational culture of civil services would change through innovation and creativity. According to them, specialisation would enhance both of them. It was viewed that civil servants should become specialists in the area they serve, such as, health and education. Satish Chandra Committee (Gol, 1989) more than two decades ago recommended, introducing changes in the examinations to encourage specialisation. This is to keep civil servants in tune with changing aspirations of the society. However, one can see

a lukewarm response of the government towards encouraging specialist orientation in civil services.

Almost all respondents said that civil servants do have least accountability to the people. It was expressed that civil servants carry an outlook of 'patron-client relations' in this regard. Ostensibly, several attempts to reform civil services did not bring in attitudinal changes. The respondents felt that there is high degree of bias in evaluating the performance of civil servants. According to them, ACRs do not take into consideration the satisfaction level of beneficiaries of services. They felt that civil servants' performance should be evaluated by all stakeholders that include the peer groups. They viewed that 360 degree performance evaluation will make civil servants accountable.

Respondents elaborated that political executives blame civil servants for the failure in implementation of a public policy or a programme. Undue interference of political executives was reported to have deprived civil servants of their freedom and caused tension between both of them. Political executives use transfer as powerful means to control honest civil servants. Respondents, it as deterrent to work freely and harmoniously with the political executive. They objected to this scenario, saying that, absence of security of tenure will affect the performance of a civil servant in undertaking the development activities. It was also said that some of civil servants are siding with the political parties for their selfish interests. This shows that politicisation of civil services since 1990s has been on the raise. This requires policy intervention by the state to make civil servants free from the undue political interference.

Respondents viewed that reforms are just rhetoric. They said that reforms are implemented at lower level of civil service, but not at higher level. For instance, they cited lateral entry in civil services has been introduced after long years of persuasion. Respondents are of the view that CSR have not been mediated through a visionary politics as political will and transformative leadership are missing in India. The same has been attributed to the incremental approach to slow implementation of reforms.

From the findings of the study, it was evident that there was yawning gap between expectations of sample respondents and performance of civil servants. A commonly observed perception is that civil servants departed from the goals of constitution i.e. welfare of citizens. A concern expressed was the decline of ethics among civil servants. Therefore, all the stakeholders expressed the need for reengineering civil services with divergent views on how to go about it.

Though there were divergent views on selection process, it was widely perceived that right candidates should be selected to civil service. The young respondents of the study were highly critical of the recent reform in recruitment, that is, CSAT. They raised concerns about the same practice of the recruitment by UPSC. Ostensibly, UPSC seem to have failed to convince civil service aspirants about the need for reforms as their doubts regarding English language, bias against region and social sciences and humanities remain unanswered. This purportedly led to an agitation against CSAT in the North in India in mid-2014. There was consensus among the respondents that the work culture of civil servants matters a lot. To a large extent it was number of respondents perceived that civil servants are becoming inefficient in delivering services. In contrast to the popular perception, research findings conclude that reservations would not affect quality of civil service. Instead it was felt necessary to enhance the representation of lower castes in civil services. There is growing evidence that efficiency and reservation are not correlated, if one goes by efficiency principle of NPM.

It was evident from the study that civil servants were averse to adapt to change. As Caiden (1969) cites, resistance is concomitant of the process of reform. Since reform is a transformatory process, one cannot expect civil servants to accept the reforms in totally. Moreover, political executive does not have a vision in the implementation of CSR. It can be concluded that CSR was envisaged to mould civil servants to uphold the welfare goals enshrined in the constitution. These perspectives from the findings of the study will provide a policy feedback in implementation of CSR.

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Notes

¹India is comprised of 29 states and 7 Union Territories.

²Mrs. Indira Gandhi was the Prime Minister of India during the period: 1964-1977. There was decline in the vote base of the Congress Party throughout India. Simultaneously the regional parties were emerging

in many states, especially in Southern India. This was a threat to Congress' dominance. During the same period Indian economy was undergoing a tough time with successive crop failures, negative consequences of Five Year Plans and high inflation. The congress party lost its credibility among the masses. To overcome this credibility crisis, it was attributed that Mrs. Ganadhi's government devised a plan to have a 'committed bureaucracy'.

³For details, see Seminar (1973). The district collectors were guided by the orders from the politicians. District Collector is the highest authority of the district, a unit of administration in India.

The so-called independent and neutral civil servants started losing their autonomy marking a negative development in Indian Administration.

⁴The survey revealed that out of a maximum score of 100, the Election Commission secured 62, state governments and judiciary 59, local government 58, central government 57, public representatives 40, political parties 39, bureaucracy 37 and police 28.

⁵IAS is the premier service among all the other All India Services.

⁶UPSC is the recruiting agency of civil servants in India on all-India basis.

⁷CSAT is the first phase of civil service examination for entry into civil services held by UPSC in the month of May. It was introduced in 2011 by replacing the earlier preliminary examination. CSAT consists of two papers: Paper I and Paper II. Paper-I consists of the history of India, Indian and World Geography, Indian Polity and Governance and General Science etc. On the other hand, Paper II tests a candidate's ability in comprehension, interpersonal skills, logical reasoning and analytical ability, decision making and problem solving etc.

⁸Constitution of India reserves certain percentage of posts in recruitment of civil services for candidates belonging to weaker sections that include Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes and Physically Disabled categories.

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