REFORMING INDIA’S HIGHER CIVIL SERVICES: AGENDA FOR 21ST CENTURY REFORMS

KULDEEP FADIA

The ramifications of global changes are being felt by the government in the form of increasing citizen expectations for better governance through effective service delivery, transparency, accountability and rule of law. The civil service, as the prime constituent of government, must keep pace with the changing times in order to meet the aspirations of the people. The purpose of reform is to reorient the civil services into a dynamic, efficient and accountable apparatus for public service delivery built on the public service ethos and values of integrity, equity and neutrality.

The history of higher civil service reforms in post-Independence period is full of half-hearted and feeble attempts. The framework of reforming civil services should be holistic and also include questions regarding integrity, competencies and accountability of the services. Any piecemeal approach, as in the past, is bound to prove futile. The Civil Services Examination Committee (Y. K. Alagh Committee) in its report submitted in 2001 observed, “…………… that recruitment, training and management of the civil services are interrelated components of the same system and one cannot succeed without the other. Any effort to rectify only one aspect to the exclusion of others will mean trying to cure the symptom rather than the disease.”

The paramount need of the day obviously is to take purposive action to restore confidence in national institutions and to re-establish the credibility of higher civil services. Performance alone will reverse the trend and restore faith in administration. The bureaucracy must cleanse itself, refashion its operating culture and offer convincing proof of its ability to handle situations and solve problems. Also, it has to show itself to be more sensitive, responsive and vulnerable to the changes in the socio-economic

environment and to the urges and aspirations of the common masses. Instead of spending a disproportionately large part of its time in dealing with contingencies it must be alive to emerging situations and deal with unanticipated turn of events. It means that it has to be seriously taken to research in policy planning. Today, the entire area of policy making in India remains unchanged and in many sectors of national life it is difficult to say if a definite policy does exist.

In recent times, there has been accelerated changes globally, brought about by technological advances, liberalisation, greater decentralisation and social activism. A primary challenge before the government is to exploit the advantages of globalisation and international interdependence to foster economic growth while preserving sovereignty and remaining focused on economic development. The ramifications of global changes are being felt by the government in the form of increasing citizen expectations for better governance through effective service delivery, transparency, accountability and rule of law. The civil service, as the executive arm of government, must keep pace with the changing times in order to meet the aspirations of the people. The purpose of reform is also to raise the quality of public services delivered to the citizens and enhance the capacity to carry out core government functions, thereby, leading to suitable development.

The main components of civil service reforms should pertain to the following:

**Civil Services Performance System**

The present promotion system in civil service is based on time-scale and is coupled by its security of tenure. These elements in our civil service are making the dynamic civil servants complacent and many of the promotions are based upon the patronage system. The non-inclusion of incentives or disincentives for performance is a major drawback for civil services and is making Indian civil service largely unaccountable to the state.

Civil servants are not only recruited through open competitive examination, but certain officials from the state governments are also being promoted. The whole idea of All India Civil Services gets lost when other state officials are promoted to the rank of All India Services and work in the state itself. This is really a retrograde step. It should be made mandatory for the officers who are thus promoted to serve in other states to keep the idea of creating a working All India Civil Services.

These promotions should be merit based and the respective authorities have to benchmark the best practices and evaluate the performance of the civil servants both qualitatively and quantitatively with a variety of parameters. The performance appraisal of civil servants has to be according
to these benchmarks and the necessary placement, reward and punishments can be taken up by the authorities.

The recent reform in Hong Cong Civil Services mandated that the civil servants would be recruited on a permanent basis but their continuation in the job would be subject to assessment based on performance indicators from time-to-time. This model can be replicated in India also. There may be periodic performance reviews or audits for civil servants, especially when they turn fifty or complete a certain number of years in service.

The Surender Nath Committee rightly observed, “Given the rapidly evolving challenges of public management, the present objectives of performance appraisal need to be widened and deepened to respond to the emerging needs of governance. In this context, performance appraisal cannot serve only as a tool to assess suitability for vertical movement, but should be primarily used for the overall development of an officer, and for his placement in an area where his abilities and potential can be used to best advantage.”

Performance Related Incentive Scheme

The Sixth Pay Commission in its report has recommended introduction of a new performance based pecuniary benefit, over and above regular salary, for the government employees. The benefit will be called Performance Related Incentive Scheme (PRIS) and will be payable taking into account the performance of the employee during the period under consideration. It is based on the principle of differential reward for differential performance. The end objective of introducing PRIS in government is not just limited to improving employee motivation; obtaining higher productivity or output and delivering quality public service; but it seeks larger goals of effectiveness and systematic change for responsive governance. “PRIS provides an opportunity to shift from the classical command and control administrative approach with vertical and horizontal differentiation to more holistic, flexible, empowering and consultative styles of working leading to greater job satisfaction and productivity.” This flexible model will enable better responsiveness and performance for service delivery. The structure of PRIS allows flexibility with freedom to innovate and bring about public service delivery oriented changes in work process utilising ICT; up-scaling of best practices; with greater delegation and introduction of High Performance Work Practices (HPWP) in a budget neutral framework.

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Recruitment

Civil service recruitment and promotion hinge on several factors such as patronage versus merit; the relative importance of ethnic, religious, regional and caste preferences. Even where countries adopt a merit-based system, various practices militate in favour of these biases. An explicit political dimension becomes pronounced not only at the highest level of policy and programme formulation, but also at the lowest levels of regulatory and control activities.

Such political pressures are most pronounced in countries with diverse ethnic, religious and cultural groups. The stress on recruitment and promotion becomes severe where economic growth has not opened up job opportunities for the employable, either educated or unskilled and the government becomes the employer of the last resort. However, where economics expand, public employment tends to shed bias restrictions and even to use private sector practices to induct qualified people into the civil service.

The changes in our economy create a need for specialists at various jobs. With rapidly advancing technology and high degrees of specialisation in every field, the country can no longer afford to put generalists in positions requiring specialised skills. The entry and exit of civil servants from public service to private sector and vice versa, will make the civil servants’ jobs more attractive, thus making it a new economy job. This may create the risk of competition feeding into the civil services even more insidiously than it already has. But that will at least help enforce accountability and be beneficial in the long run.

There are different opinions regarding the extent to which the civil service will benefit from the entry of outsiders. On the positive side, many maintain that lateral recruitment practices will help bring fresh ideas and skills into government, and that it will also provide incentives for current civil servants to perform better or risk being passed over for the prime postings. Yet a number of factors have to be balanced against these advantages. The response of the organised sector to the deputation of its senior management and professionals to Central and state governments is not clear. Karnataka’s Administrative Reforms Commission cautions about the need to ensure that the skills which lateral entrants are expected to bring in were not otherwise available within the civil service, which is needed to avoid the risk that the selection process becomes ad hoc and ends up demoralising existing personnel. The other sensitive issues are the offer of market related salaries and the process of selection. It is necessary to lay down an open and uniformly enforced process of eligibility criteria, selection and assessment to avoid charges of arbitrary and politically biased appointments.
The challenges confronting expanded use of lateral recruitment are important, but not decisive. The issue must be addressed carefully in a phased and systematic manner, which will allow governments to take full advantage of the benefits in terms of improved skills and motivation while mitigating against some of the costs in terms of political favouritism and demoralisation.

Building a motivated and capable civil service requires merit-based and non-discriminatory recruitment, which rests on the absence of political patronage, transparent rules and procedures, open competition and selection by an independent agency. Subsequently, important elements in meritocracy and the motivation of employees are the opportunities for promotion, recognition and reward for performance, inter-sector mobility, placement in right jobs and the scope for skill upgrading and self-improvement. It is equally important to address demotivating factors like frequent and arbitrary transfers, a poor work environment, decrepit housing and health care facilities, as well as special factors affecting women in office and field jobs. Civil service does not function in vacuum; civil service reforms require a relook at the entire management of human resources in government and the incentives and disincentives facing the public service from top to bottom.

**Strengthening Meritocracy in Service**

In the final assessment, promotion – with its higher emoluments and enhanced status – remains a key element of motivation. There are differing approaches to the use of seniority and merit as criteria for promotion in countries following a similar hierarchical, ‘mandarin’ structure of civil service management. Singapore consistently promotes people entirely according to merit and it is common to see younger officers supersede more senior, but less competent, officers. Malaysia follows a system of promotion and annual salary progression based upon a new performance appraisal and remuneration system.

The National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution has recommended the creation of a statutory body: Civil Services Board (CSB) to look into issues such as transfers and promotion of civil servants (NCRWC, 6.7.1). This will help in reducing political pressures on the careers of civil servants and better use of civil service resources. Sanjoy Bagchi observes, “The Commission must be invested with such functions that would increase professional competence and strengthen political neutrality of the IAS. There would be strong resistance from the politicians who would hate to lose their control over the service. The state governments are more likely to insist on the retention of their existing power for the sake of proper implementation of their programmes. These arguments are valid to some extent. But at the same time it has to be conceded that the
overall performance of the service has reached such low depths that a change in controlling structure has become imperative…… The Commission must be entrusted with the total management of the service and it must have last word in all respects”.4

Reforming the Annual Confidential Report Process

Because of its impact on salary, career prospects and decisions on premature retirement, the framework for performance appraisal has important consequences for the motivation of employees. The Annual Confidence Report process is also meant to be used in training and human resource development, confirmation and crossing efficiency bars.

The question of how employee performance should be systematically evaluated in a fair and reliable fashion, without generating unnecessary conflict, is a complicated one. Although supervisors have the right to provide continuous feedback and guidance to employees, Annual Confidence Reports (or ACRs) are the principal means of periodic formal appraisal. However, the non-transparent, subjective and unilateral character of ACRs in all states has reduced its utility for public agencies and alienated employees. Discussions between the evaluator and employee being evaluated are absent and typically take place only if an adverse remark is being entered. There are wide variations in the grading of civil servants between states and the linking of empanelment of civil servants to ACRs has led to a system of civil servants following up their ACRs to the level of the political masters.

Serious efforts to reform the system of performance assessment are urgently needed. The Surender Nath Committee5 was very recently tasked to recommend changes in the system of performance appraisal to ensure greater transparency, so that better performance (or its lack) is fairly and accurately reflected in the appraisal; and to ensure a more clearly defined linkage between performance appraisal, experience and skills with career advancement and placements in senior positions in governments. The Committee favours that a system of numerical grading may be introduced for evaluating the work output, the personal attributes, the functional competencies and the overall assessment. These may be done on a 1-10 scale, with one referring to the poorest grade and 10 to the highest. The Committee nevertheless considers that it would be useful to supplement

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the formal PAR regime with an institutionalise means of ascertaining the reputations of civil servants, consistence with our culture and ethos. Accordingly, each cadre controlling authority may, at its option, set up “Eminent Persons Group” (EPG), i.e. persons of acknowledged character and wisdom who clearly do not have any personal stakes in the civil service career in particular. Such persons (say, 5, who may serve of three years at a time on a pro-bono basis) may be drawn from retired civil servants, public figures and academics. The EPG (names to be kept strictly confidential) may through various means, e.g. discreet personal inquiries or more structured approaches such as personal interviews or administration of questionnaires, from a range of peers, juniors and clients, ascertain the reputation (in respect of financial and moral integrity, professional competence, attitudes and personal qualities) of each civil servant of the concerned cadre once every five year, starting from the 10th year of service. It would set out their findings in a confidential report to the concerned cadre controlling authority. This information may be compiled separately from the PAR dossier, and may be useful in the following contexts, besides others:

*Developing Specialisation / Professionalism*

Within the civil services, there has to be a conscious move away from the generalist approach to the specialist one and upgradation of knowledge and skill should be made a lifelong process. Even if officers are recruited as generalists, they should be encouraged to specialise in one sector or the other. The core competencies of the officers should be identified and consciously developed after the initial eight to ten years of service. For encouraging development of professionalism in civil services, there should be a specific career development plan for each officer involving both core competencies as well as general leadership as they move up. The officers should be periodically sent for specialised training in one of the leading professional institutions, which should include at least a three month stint abroad, for capacity building and whenever necessary, more training be provided at the best institutions in India and abroad. The specialisation can be in the social sector, viz., social welfare, housing, environment, education, health, or it can be in the field of management of natural resources like land, water, forests, or it can be science and technology, or commerce, economics and finance, or in the areas of security of disaster management. Further, once the officers have specialised in a particular sector, they must be supported to continue in that sector.

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6 Ibid, pp. 69-70.
7 Ibid, p. 70.
The Civil Services Examination Review Committee\(^8\) is of the view that enhancement of professional skills and development of capabilities will enable the officers to access opportunities to spend some time, preferably even a sabbatical, in the private sector or with NGOs / cooperatives / non-profit organisations or with academia and then return to the government with new perspectives. The government should protect not only the salary but also provide some funds for the project to be undertaken during the sabbatical year. The Committee foresees a time when the existing system of managing posts by cadre officers would generally cease to exist and it would be appropriate to plant at this stage the seeds of a new and more professional system where the old rigid structures of government would change. With the advent of stronger local governments as well as community and NGOs involvement in all development programmes, the state would retreat from managing the micro economy. A well developed professional value system will also enable the civil servants to discharge their duties in a professional and objective manner without succumbing to any kind of extraneous pressures. The Committee believes that continuing education, as a process of lifelong learning will sustain such professionalism and opportunities should be provided for the same.\(^9\)

**Mobility for the Services and Lateral Entry of Professionals**

In addition to the combined examination, recruitment should also be made by other methods, especially at the level of Joint Secretary and above, e.g. lateral entry with contractual appointment and lateral entry with permanent retention. Initial lateral entry may be by way of appointment as Officer on Special Duty with limited tenure assignments. If the inductee performs very well, she / he could be offered a permanent position and five per cent vacancies could be reserved for such entrants. There should be more lateral entry, which is at present restricted only to finance and economic department and Planning Commission. In USA, there is a lateral entry system at the highest levels which is open for all. There is need for differentiated skills, which requires recruitment of specialists, to make entry open, from within and outside. When officers know they will have to compete, they will work towards accumulation of relevant professional experience. Mobility across services / between services should be explored. Meritorious persons, even from NGOs / non-profit organisations / cooperatives, who have done well, should be taken at the middle and senior levels. A provision already exists under Rule 6 (2) (ii) of the All India

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Service (Cadre) rules for sending out All India Services officers to NGOs, corporations, cooperative societies, etc. It will be desirable to continue this practice not only in respect of All India Services but also for the Central Services.

Deadwood

It is said that a number of civil servants become deadwood and hence, seriously affect the delivery of service due to lack of professionalism and commitment to public service. In a significant pronouncement, the Supreme Court has recently called upon the government virtually to take a fresh look at the entire gamut of official and public sector employment. Its view is that only useful employees should be retained and those who are indolent, infirm … of doubtful integrity, reputation of utility weeded out. This implies that the potential for continued utility in service should be the only criteria for allowing anyone to continue and prosper in the service. This problem can be tackled partly by periodic evaluation of performance of the officers and by planning the seeds of professionalism at an early stage among those who have the potential and partly by weeding them out or sidelining them. This will, at one stroke, eliminate the complacency the permanent employment engenders. Consequentially, seniority alone will not be the sole criterion for career advancement.

Stability of Tenure

Despite the rules and various instructions issued from time to time, there is a genuine problem being faced by officers, especially in the case of All India Services serving in the state governments, relating to their tenures. It has been noticed that with every change in government there is usually a reshuffling of officers, especially in key postings in districts, with the result that the average tenure in certain states for District Magistrates / Collectors and for Superintendents of Police has now come to less than a year only. Such a rapid turnover of officers adversely affects delivery and quality of services provided to the common man. The ever-present threat of transfer also affects the morale of the officers and their capacity to stand up to undesirable local pressures. In the long run, frequent transfer of officers of the All India Services in the states delays implementation of projects and also prevents officers from picking-up meaningful experience which would enhance their value to the state government and the Central government when they hold higher positions at the policy making levels. The Conference of Chief Ministers on May 24, 1997 had observed that frequent and arbitrary transfer of public servants affects the ability of the system to deliver services effectively to the people. The Civil Services Reform Committee (Hota Committee) in its report
submitted in July, 2004 observes that “We feel that if an officer of the higher civil service is given a fixed tenure of at least three years in his post and given annual performance targets, effectiveness of the administrative machinery will register a quantum jump”.10

The Hota Committee is firmly of the view that a Civil Services Act has to be enacted to make the Civil Services Board / Establishment Board both in the states and in the Government of India statutory in character. In the proposed set up in the Government of India, the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet will be the final authority for transfer of officers under the Central Staffing Scheme. The same principle of fixed tenure should apply to senior officers, who are not under the Central Staffing Scheme, but are working under the Government of India for which the departmental minister in charge is the final authority for transfer. The Chief Minister will be the final authority for transfer of all Group ‘A officers of State Service and AIS officers serving in connection with affairs of the state. If a Chief Minister does not agree with the recommendations of the Civil Services Board/ Establishment Board, he will have to record his reasons in writing. An officer transferred before his normal tenure even under orders of the Chief Minister can present the matter before a three-member Ombudsman. The Chairperson of the Ombudsman will be a retired official of proven honesty and integrity. The other two members can be on part-time basis from among serving officers. In all such premature transfers the Ombudsman shall send a report to the Governor of the state, who shall cause it to be laid in an Annual Report before the State Legislature.

Improving Service Delivery

The cutting edge point is the most important node in the entire ladder of administration. All the policies, priorities, projects, programmes and schemes get a meaningful shape in terms of implementation at this point. The government is put to acid test at the cutting edge. Therefore, it is not only imperative but inevitable that, district and local administration are made simple, effective, efficient, transparent and accountable. Improving service delivery necessitates a dynamic change in philosophy and practice from (a) administration to management, (b) excessive regulation to facilitation, (c) administrative-centric governance to citizen-centric governance, (d) centralised to decentralised governance, (e) expenditure tracking to outcome tracking, and (f) viewing citizens as customers rather than as beneficiaries. It is the district and local administration that have to play the operational role in translating the policies and programmes into

credible actions by providing services to the citizens effectively, equitably and transparently.

Over the time, the role and responsibilities of public administration have become increasingly complicated and convoluted. There has been a manifold growth in the number of schemes and programmes, departments and personnel operating at the state, district and local tiers. However, in view of the 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution, there is a need for redefining the role of administration at all the tiers of governance. This role of civil servants in service planning and delivery at the state, district and local levels has to be discharged in the framework of decentralisation mandated by the 73rd and 74th Amendments.

A key area of action is to transform administration from a supply-driven approach to demand-based. Civil service must enable people to exercise their voice and customer power to demand better services and discharge some responsibilities such as supervision and vigilance over service delivery and monitoring service quantity, quality and performance themselves. Involving people in identifying their needs and demands, and in designing and implementing policies and programmes can go a long way to engage citizens as partners in the development process and increase development effectiveness. Citizen governance should be recognised as the foundation of representative democracy. It increases the democratic content of government and provides opportunities for citizens to take interest in public affairs. This calls for a fundamental change in the process of governance and a paradigm shift in the nature of operation of the higher civil service.

Selection to Senior Administrative Grade and Higher Administrative Grade

The Sixth Central Pay Commission in its report\textsuperscript{11} recommends opening up of all the deputation posts under Central Staffing Scheme or outside it to all the eligible officers whether belonging to AIS or Group - A Central Civil Services. The Commission is fully aware that in theory these posts are already open to all AIS as well as Central Group A Services. However, in practice, the selection procedure for these posts has been made so non-transparent that the credibility of the entire selection procedure is now being questioned. The pressing need is to ensure a selection process that is open, transparent and gives equitable chance to all the eligible officers. To attain this end, all the posts filled by deputation in the Senior Administrative Grade and Higher Administrative Grade should be filled through an open selection process conducted by an independent agency. The function of

the independent agency should be done by the UPSC by involving few outside experts in the relevant field. For selection of SAG / HAG levels posts, all group A officers who are already in the SAG / HAG levels, respectively in their own cadre including those who have been given the scale non-functionally or personal basis would be eligible.

Training for Improvement

There cannot be any two views on the importance of the training for public services. All jobs in public administration, whether high or low, involve an element of skill and they are to be performed at optimum efficiency, such skills have to be methodically and systematically cultivated.

The pre-service IAS training curriculum prepares a common person to be a professional in the administrative field. This course includes both theoretical and practical parts. It is found that the course suffers from imbalance whether either theoretical or practical part is given greater importance. Foundation course is not experience based and research oriented. One or two weeks ‘general module’ of management with behavioural science inputs in training programmes needs to be substituted by more in-depth training in the area. Training needs to be more focused in developing competencies in the functional areas along with the generalised module. It should revolve around creating professional personality, which has three aspects, namely: (i) Competencies (ii) Performance and (iii) Commitment.

The present system of induction training for the IAS probationers is divided into four parts: Foundational Course, Professional Course Phase – I, District Training and Professional Course Phase – II. The scheme of breaking up the professional training of the IAS into bits and pieces was conceived by the ARC whose proposal was surprisingly accepted by the government quickly without much examination. This was the ‘sandwich course’ with the district training sandwiched between two spells of the training in the academy. The initial period of seven months of professional training was effectively reduced to mere 26 weeks (out of which 9 weeks are being taken up by Bharat Darshan Study Tour outside Mussoorie), which was hardly sufficient to fulfil the knowledge needs of the probationers. A large number of them came straight to the Academy from technical institutions. Having never been to the university, they had hardly any acquaintance with social sciences or the humanities that would be essential for their professional work in future. Others, in spite of their knowledge of the humanities would need to deepen their understanding and familiarise themselves with totally new areas like the intricacies of criminal and revenue law and jurisprudence, principles of public administration, administrative structures and systems, etc. The initial 17 weeks hardly enough for this pedagogy, would be interrupted by the
departure for the district training. The second part of the professional training in the Academy was intended by the ARC to be ‘problem oriented’ and devoted to mutual exchange of ‘experience and observations of the trainees in the states’. The probationers have not yet completed their district training; they have yet to obtain a complete picture of district administration; and they have hardly any experience of practical working. How can this part of the training be problem oriented? What sort of experience will they share with each other?12

The efficacy and the quality of the district training depend upon the supervision by the Collector. During colonial days, the British attached a lot of importance to the quality of district training of the young ICS. They were usually posted to particular districts which were known as training districts where experienced and competent collectors were posted so that they could impart proper training. The British system broke down after Independence because suitable trainers were no longer available and the number of trainees exceeded the training districts and had to be accommodated elsewhere. The Collectors being the kingpins of the administration have always been terribly busy ever since the programme of rural development began. From the 1980s, they were even more hard pressed. Earlier they have always been the coordinators of various departments being the principal agents of the government. Now they also became the target chasers, holding innumerable meetings everyday to push the government programmes. The cabinets expanded and ministers became peripatetic, expecting the Collectors to dance around them. The mobile phone was another curse, which chased the Collectors everywhere. Amongst there multifarious tasks they could hardly pay attention to the training needs of the probationers. Many of them found it embarrassing if the youngsters overheard their conversations with the ministers or were hanging around during delicate deals with local people. The intimate relationship between the Collector and the trainee that had existed in the past was now a part of history. Therefore an alternative could be to post the probationers at divisional headquarters where Commissioners could supervise the district training. The Commissioners have the knowledge, the experience and the time to devote for the probationers. They would be in a position to create the much needed esprit de corps in the new generation. They are not as preoccupied as the Collectors and could also undertake the teaching of professional ethics and standards of behaviour by their own examples.13

12Sanjoy Bagchi n. 4, pp. 508-509.
13Ibid, p. 5.
An overarching weakness for all training programmes is the minimal value attached to training by many senior officers. Caught up in the compulsion of short-term needs as against the long-term objectives of an organisation, immediate supervisors may tend to be guided by the compulsions of the immediate need and not spare their best officers for training. This implies that only “spareables” get trained and not the more important “good performers”. Also, those who are appointed to train are frequently from the ‘spareable’ category and are not chosen on the basis of their ability, commitment and knowledge of training. As a corollary to this trainings are often not taken seriously by the trainees. The Second Administrative Reforms Commission in its report pointed out that only 198 weeks out of a 33-36 years (11%) or longer career of a civil servant is likely to be spent on his/her training as is evident from the schematic depiction of a typical career training schedule for an IAS.\(^{14}\)

It has also been observed that the training programmes do not provide adequate emphasis on ‘administrative law’. A large number of civil servants discharge quasi-judicial functions. Besides, with increasing accountability of civil servants and a large number of decisions of government facing judicial scrutiny, it is imperative that all civil servants are well acquainted with the laws and their application in general and administrative law in particular. Training programmes of civil servants at all levels must address this issue.\(^{15}\)

CONCLUSION

The IAS is a generalist service *par excellence*. It does not require any professional qualification as a prerequisite for entry, not even a nodding acquaintance with public administration although it is an administrative service. It has not succeeded developing collectively a common ethos of functioning. It does not observe any code of professional ethics. It was conceived as a meritocracy in which the best available talents of the country would be inducted by fair competition open to all in the country. The talents of the selected human material were to be honed and sharpened by induction training of necessary knowledge and skills for good governance. The Service members were to be screened as they go up the hierarchy from one grade to another to remove the unfit and the deadwood. Only the best were

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\(^{15}\)Ibid, p.137.
supposed to reach the top echelons where the interactions of policy formulation and its administration take place. That was the initial connection but meritocracy began to crack up soon after the passing away of the founder of the Service.\textsuperscript{16}

It has also been found empirically that “there is no relationship between the career path of the IAS officer and the nature of the training programmes for which he is sent during his career.” There is even reluctance to utilise the past specialised experience in future assignments. It is also reported that ‘the pattern of sponsorship of IAS officers shows that there is no relationship between the status – role of the officers and the training for which they are sponsored. In these circumstances, training has to be focussed on ‘management of policy formulation, programme development and programme implementation; sensitisation to the implications of policy formulation as well as management of human and technical resources.’\textsuperscript{17}

A Bench of Justices K.S. Radhakrishnan and Pinaki Chandra Ghose, giving a series of directions while disposing of a public interest writ petition filed by 83 retired civil servants and others said civil servants should not act on verbal orders given by politicians and suggested a fixed tenure for them.

Writing the judgement, Justice Radhakrishnan said “the Civil Service Board (CSB), consisting of high ranking service officers, who are experts in their respective fields, with the Cabinet Secretary at the Centre and Chief Secretary at the State level, could be a better alternative (till the Parliament enacts a law), to guide and advise the State government on all service matters, especially on transfers, postings and disciplinary action, etc., though their views also could be overruled, by the political executive, but by recording reasons, which would ensure good governance, transparency and accountability in governmental functions.”

The Bench said “We notice, at present the civil servants are not having stability of tenure, particularly in the State governments where transfers and postings are made frequently, at the whims and fancies of the executive head for political and other considerations and not in public interest. The necessity of minimum tenure has been endorsed and implemented by the Union Government. In fact, we notice, almost 13 states have accepted the necessity of a minimum tenure for civil servants. Fixed minimum tenure


would not only enable the civil servants to achieve their professional targets, but also help them to function as effective instruments of public policy.\textsuperscript{18}

Briefly, civil service reforms aim at strengthening administrative capability to perform core government functions. These reforms raise the quality of services to the citizens that are essential to the promotion of sustainable economic and social development.