

PERSPECTIVE EVALUATION OF MISSION KARMAYOGI SCHEME IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Mission Karmayogi is a bold initiative of Government of India to democratize the training process and puts everyone on the same playing field. This mission emphasizes the 'servant' part in the acclaimed civil services. It attempts to address the issues in the existing system, such as complexity and red-tapism, through a capacity-building initiative working at an individual, institutional, and procedural level. The training of employees is a crucial part of their work tenure, but it is only limited to certain topmost services. The 89% of bureaucrats who are in direct touch with the public receive fragmented and sub-par training. Through a bottom-up approach and digitized way of working and training, it attempts to end the 'work-silo' culture of the bureaucracy. Mission Karmayogi aims to cover 46 lakhs employees of the central government within its purview. The government plans to spend INR 510.86 crore over five years, from FY 2021-22 to FY 2024-25. External accountability and transparency must be crucial for more excellent responsiveness. Improved information systems can ensure this, responsibility for inputs, better audit, publishing all the budget summarised and track records related to this mission by each department suo motto, and a more robust performance evaluation system. Mission Karmayogi is India's first robust mission to reform civil services and empower them to deliver services effectively and efficiently. It must deal with many issues and tensions. This mission can sail through all these shortcomings if the program is powered with an extended vision and fuelled by constant motivation.

Keywords: Mission Karmayogi, Governance, Bureaucracy, Reform, Training, Capacity Building, Accountability, Transparency, India.

INTRODUCTION

Karma-Yogi is a person who considers his work a form of worship or prayer. Such a person believes that diligently working to better society through the assigned task is righteous and above all other forms and manifestations of fulfilling one's purpose. Short-term personal benefits or harms do not influence their work and aims. The more significant idea of duty, metamorphosed by their conscience and logic, sustains their perseverance and dedication. Rightly so, this is the attitude India desires to have within its strong frames of bureaucracy. Once dubbed as the "steel frame of India" by our revered national freedom fighter Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel on the lines of Llyod George, at the Metcalf House in 1947, Indian bureaucracy has come a long way and sustained a plethora of changes and reforms over the years. From playing a central role in uniting the nations through Instruments of Accession by inducing political environment in over 550 princely states of 1947 India to the recent digitalization of their work demanding substantial efforts and time, bureaucracy has proven its efficiency and significance for effective policy implementation. As John Locke points out, "There are two sides, two players. One is light. The other is dark." The bureaucracy in India also has a dark side that has challenged society and the government for so long. While certain sections dismiss the bureaucracy by

criticizing its imperialistic and elitist structure and “*modus operandi*,” the majority acknowledges their need and the dire requirements for reforms. Past governments have deployed many attempts to reform this institution, but the problem is much larger than loosely bound frail schemes.

Rajiv Gandhi described the nature of public maladministration in the following words:

“We have government servants who do not serve but oppress the poor and the helpless, which do not uphold the law but connive with those who cheat the state and whole legions whose only concern is their private welfare at the cost of society. They have no work ethic, no feeling for the public cause, no involvement in the nation’s future, no comprehension of national goals, and no commitment to the values of modern India. They have only a grasping mercenary outlook, devoid of competence, integrity, and commitment” (Saxena, 2012)

It is crucial to study the history and evolution of the administrative reforms in the country coupling with the newly gained and popularised concept of human resource management to have a clear perception and justification of the intervention by the government. History is an exciting area to reflect on the shortcomings of the past. As the American author George Santayana claims, “*Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it*,” it is essential to look back to save us from the duplication of work and efforts.

Reforms of yore may be categorized under three major headings: reforms suggested by higher civil servants such as N. Gopalaswamy Ayyangar, A.D. Gorwala, A.K. Chanda, and V.T. Krishnamachari; reforms initiated by the legislature, mainly comprising Reports of the Estimates Committee, the various Pay Commission Reports, and so on; and in a few instances those offered by foreign experts at the request of the Govt. of India such as those by Appleby and Ford Foundation, the latter resulting in the establishment of the Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA) in Delhi. However, there was minimal dependence on foreign governmental advice and assistance. The government of India formed the Secretariat reorganization committee of 1947 to deal with the immediate shortages of resources and better efficiency. Next came N. Gopalaswamy Ayyangar’s Report of 1950, which comprehensively reviewed the working machinery of the central government. A.D. Gorwala Committee of 1951 presented its report on Public Administration and emphasized transparency and accountability. Ironically, these are the issues the government is still addressing even after 70 years. A substantial initiative in this regard is the Appleby reports of 1953 and 1956. Paul H. Appleby, a noted American scholar, was invited to review the administration, and his words focus on critical areas of administration reorganization, work procedures, recruitment, and training. The consequent establishment of the IIPA in Delhi and the Organization and Methods division are critical initiatives under the recommendations.

Appleby reports substantially shaped our approach to public administration. In essence, these reforms were done on a socialist background, owing to the dire need of a Welfare state on poverty and hunger struck India. Committee on Plan projects of 1962 and Committee on prevention of Corruption of 1962 emphasized work techniques and control on corruption and other malpractices in the bureaucracy. The latter suggested the formation of the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC). A significant initiative in administrative reforms was the setting up of the Administrative Reforms Commission of 1966. It had the most comprehensive scope as it encompassed the entire gamut of the public services and formulated detailed reports. The Kothari committee of 1976 talked about the recruitment processes, while the Economic Reforms commission of 1981 focussed on the critical areas of economic administration. To bring forth the idea of good governance, the Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances organized a conference of Chief Secretaries in 1996. A follow-up Chief Minister’s Conference

was organized in 1997 to formulate an Action Plan for effective and responsible governance. Yugandhar Committee of 2003 had a similar initiative to Mission Karmayogi. It aimed at linking career progression to the completion of training programs. These suggestions had certain shortcomings, which this monograph discusses in later sections. Second Administrative Reforms Commission of 2005 covered an even wide range of topics ranging from ethics, disaster management, Right to Information, among a total of fifteen reports. The Mid-career Training program of 2007 was another ambitious initiative by the government which linked incentives and penalties to performance in training to boost motivation and assure quality training. These and many more reform initiatives at a national, state, and local level in ministries, departments, and organizations have slowly enhanced the system. Still, as Robert Frost describes, *"Miles to go before I sleep,"* India has a long way to go before boasting its robust steel frame of civil services.

Given the wide range of accessibility of the bureaucracy, it is necessary to attempt a holistic understanding of the recent initiative by the government to reform the bureaucracy through better training in an online mode. India's bureaucracy is suffering from The Post Office Paradox. The elementary administrators have started to view themselves as disempowered and stagnant 'cogs' in a steel-caged bureaucratic and hierarchical structure. They perceive their role in the system as *"post offices,"* doing the bidding of higher authorities, chauffeuring information between the top and bottom of the system. Dysfunctional bureaucratic nature can be attributed to many symptoms or consequences: misconduct, rent-seeking, indifference, worker absenteeism, and bungling services. A significant issue in the system is that of last-mile implementation, as the orders originating in air-conditioned ministries in New Delhi are vaporized before reaching the scorching corruption-ridden land of India. Bureaucrats are overloaded with responsibilities relative to their workforce and physical resources. Through the example of Block Development Officers (BDOs), they use the term *"rationing"* to denote the failure of the administration to implement policies despite the associated legal entitlements. The system's fragile capacity and workforce are not rooted in the malfeasance or ill-will of the bureaucrats but in the systemic political and policy failure to invest sufficiently in local bureaucratic power. The cabinet approved the National Program for Civil Services Capacity Building on 2nd September 2020 to build a new architecture for civil services capacity building at individual, institutional, and process levels, ensuring efficient public service delivery. For this inherent flaw in the policies for administrative reforms, the proposed program attempts to deal through setting up three key institutions, explained further.

Since it is a new and robust initiative in the right direction, it is incumbent to analyse the mission deeply and the possible tensions it must deal with in the system.

Development

With its vast majority, the current NDA government has taken a much-tabooed issue to end the *"babudom"* in India. The current government's regime has seen many critical epochal decisions having broad and long-run implications. Examples of implementation of Goods and Services Tax, abrogation of Article 370 and 35A, decriminalization of homosexuality in Section 377 of the IPC, and The Ram Mandir issue, among others, do substantiate the argument. Continuing the legacy, the government has introduced an ambitious program to achieve a transformed bureaucratic work culture and a better competency and state capacity.

Due to the penchant of the current NDA government for catchy labels, it popularised the National Program for Civil Services Capacity Building as Mission Karmayogi. Aims to lay a foundation for capacity building for Indian bureaucrats, this ambitious program is an epochal and

robust reform to enhance the quality of training of the civil servants, including within its ambit a wide array of services. The government designed this program so that the officers remain entrenched in the Indian culture, sensibilities, and values. They move forward in a globalized world while still being connected to their roots. The training system aspires to provide learnings from some of the best institutes, including top-notch Ivy League universities like Harvard, UC Berkeley, and the London School of Economics. The platform will deliver a world-class training program for all online by setting up an integrated Government Online Training Platform (i-GOT).

Mission Karmayogi draws its vision from certain guiding principles that provide it with a concrete idea for preparing civil servants for future endeavours. This mission highlights the transition of the officials from rule-based to role-based human resource management. This mission will revolutionize the way government allocates work and ministries, departments, and organizations. By compiling a database of all the employees with relevant details, the government can now maximize the work output by deploying domain experts where they are needed instead of a subjective, opaque, and varied allocation system. It essentially works on the idea of *“The right person with the right capabilities in the right position.”* The allotment now will be based upon an exact match between the requirements and an individual’s competency.

It emphasizes the role of “on-site learning” to complement “off-site learning.” Officers at junior levels, mainly in the Group-B and Group-C of the services, had little to no opportunity to have a well-defined and structured training in the country. The management and training were niche businesses and highly dependent on individual departments. Training from institutions outside India was an outstanding opportunity, limited to top-ranked officers in the acclaimed Group-A services. Breaking this hierarchy and inequality of options, the government has introduced a level playing field wherein ambitious, hard-working officers can access the global learning modules from reputed institutions. It shall increase their domain expertise and will give them an edge over others in work allocation. The cost of providing training will also be minimized through an online mode, making it even more accessible for officials in lower ranks to compete with topmost levels purely based on their capabilities. It also points out that existing foreign training program for All India Services officers may be made more selective. The emphasis is shifted on an online and “on-site” mode of learning, breaking the need for long sabbaticals.

It creates an ecosystem of a shared training infrastructure that includes materials, institutions, and personnel. We observe that various departments duplicate their efforts unnecessarily, causing substantial costs to the government and an overall loss to efficiency. Through a shared infrastructure model, unique insights from all the relevant groups can be brought together under a similar platform, increasing accessibility and maximizing utility. The mission also provides an opportunity to strengthen their behavioural, domain, and functional competencies. Individual ministry, departments, and organizations will invest in this shared ecosystem through an annual financing subscription on a per-employee basis. It will break the barriers of cadres and geography such that every aspiring individual can access the training and guidance unprohibited.

The government has acknowledged that the coming world would be empowered and fuelled by technology. The mission aims to use data analytics on the iGOT platform data for many tasks, including capacity building, content creation, user feedback, and mapping of competencies.

One can draw an interesting parallel between Human Resource Management and governance in the private versus public sector. The private sector appears to have mastered these skills and can efficiently manage its workforce and profits. The Indian civil services, however, cannot adopt such robust strategies overnight. It is primarily because a wrong decision mostly does not amount to legal action against a single individual in the private sector. The private sector also does not have to face the three cursed Cs: Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), and Central Vigilance Commission (CVC). Nevertheless, Mission Karmayogi slowly aims better to manage the vast human resource in the civil services.

Budget

Mission Karmayogi aims to cover 46 lakhs employees of the central government within its purview. The government plans to spend 510.86 crore rupees over five years, from FY 2021-22 to FY 2024-25. This amount will be partly funded by multilateral assistance of USD 50 million from the World Bank.

FRACing the Bureaucracy

FRAC, as a part of the larger Mission Karmayogi, involves the mapping of three primary constructs, i.e., roles, activities, and competencies, through the backing of knowledge resources for everyone in any ministry, department, and organization on a national, state, or local level that comes under the purview of the mission (Government of India, 2020)

Mission Karmayogi, through FRAC, aims to enhance the competencies of officers and use the iGOT learning platform to alleviate the competency vacuum among them in a timebound and efficient manner. It shall deploy Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning to identify duplicate entries further and at the same time enhance the user interface. The process of FRACing of the bureaucracy occurs in two parts, pre-FRACing, and full-fledged FRACing. It is a continuous process; hence the department must constantly update the relevant details for this process to work. Most of the heavy lifting of FRACing will be done once every three years and a complete change every four years or after a change of government, whichever is earlier. An Internal FRACing Unit (IFU) will be established to ensure that any change in the policy or recruitment is done per the information present on the iGOT platform to ensure homogeneity. (Ministry of Railway, 2020; Dhingra, 2020).

It makes possible the use of all aspects of the 70-20-10 model of learning and development¹. The platform allows the government to break silos and harness the full potential of government officials for solutions rather than simply depending on the knowledge and skills of an individual official. It provides resources across five hubs: Competency, Learning, and Career, Discussion, and Network hub.

FRACing will help the government build the officials' capacity and fit for the upcoming challenges and responsibilities before directly pushing them into the ministries without the prerequisite knowledge.

Through its iGOT platform, the mission offers the opportunities available to entities that can produce competency-building products (CBPs). The latter is accomplished by solving the information asymmetry in the market for quality CBPs. It will essentially make the iGOT platform a vibrant marketplace. The pricing of these CBPs is left on the supply and demand intricacies on the iGOT platform.

Key issues and challenges

As is a general understanding, any new reform faces various challenges and tensions. Through a keen study, most policies have failed or have been ineffective in the implementation part. As the renowned economist John Maynard Keynes proclaims, “*The difficulty lies, not in a new idea, but in escaping from the old ones.*” The current constructs of corruption and a lack of motivation have made our bureaucracy a slow and rigid institution. A common elite perspective on the middle and front-line bureaucrats is lack of trust: the dominant cognitive map is that India’s government workers are corrupt, unresponsive, and caught up in distortionary local political and social networks. Teachers and nurses do not turn up to work, police officers insist on bribes, office bureaucrats push paper with no regard to tangible effects. It can lead to a self-enforcing arrangement in which front-line bureaucrats remain disempowered, and it becomes normative for them to follow these behaviours. Although the mission has some concrete vision and policies, they are still on paper and need meticulous handling before being practically implemented.

The reform may deal with following issues to fulfil the mission.

Incentive-linked training

Linking training programs to career progression and individual performance is Byzantine. In practice, it demands careful planning, systematic ownership, and a high degree of transparency and credibility. There also persists a lack of interest in existing civil services training programs. The Yugandhar Committee of 2003 and Mid-Career Training program of 2007 proposed incentive-linked training. The formerly linked incentives on completing training programs, and the latter tied the performance in training with few penalties and incentives; a combined approach Mission Karmayogi also applies. The program aims to link training with career milestones and department performance through continuous performance analysis, data-driven goal setting, and real-life monitoring. It uses annual scorecards and rankings to grade the overall learning process. On the face of it, Mission Karmayogi deals explicitly with the issues of the Mid-Career Training program of 2007, where attendance of the employees was a significant issue due to systemic flaws, and the training program became a burden and a mere obligation rather than an opportunity to learn and specialize, through an online mode of learning. E-learning helps with flexibility and provides more freedom for personalized time allocation. The mission gives them enough time for online coursework as most civil servants have overburdening responsibilities, regular and diverse. There are other implementation challenges as well. The mission bases its whole proposition on individual motivation linked to incentives, which can be hard to sustain if the approach and methodology are too mechanical and robotic. The methodology of performance assessment is equally imperative. It must be consistent, credible, and transparent. Frequent changes in the scoring method send ambiguous signals about improvement, whether through enhanced performance of an individual or re-weighting of scoring variables. As seen in NITI Aayog’s SDG Index Report 2020, frequent changes in the goalposts are met with mixed reactions. Given that the motivation of the employees is at stake, this mission can transform into a source of demotivation. Another issue with performance evaluation is the unclear understanding of the parameters, both during the training and afterward while applying the learning outcomes in the real world. Efficiency in civil services is narrowly defined and is mostly based on contempt for politics and adherence to rules laid by senior

officials. The parameters are never perceived from a public service and satisfaction point of view. It has further led to the issues of populism and sectarianism in the system.

Centralized ecosystem

Mission Karmayogi includes, within its ambit, Group A, Group B, and Group C officers. While the former two groups have attracted many centralized efforts, Group C personnel are the frontline workers, constituting over 89% of the total workforce, and have been most neglected in the past reforms. It is indeed a welcome step and a much-needed prioritization. Mission Karmayogi emphasizes the online mode of training and learning through centralized institution architecture, overseen directly by the Prime Minister. This centralization of authorities should be met with and balanced by a keen understanding of the content requirement and diversity of opinions and work ethics in the force. In the end, the central government is in the playing field of politics too, and the political influence majorly affects the work of the bureaucracy. The recent tensions between West Bengal's former Chief Secretary and the central government are a glaring example of how, if unregulated, powers invested in a single point can prove fatal for the nation's federalism. There have been numerous debates and accusations between parties on the federalist structure of the country. 102nd amendment of the constitution about reservation provisions, NCT of Delhi Act, 2021, and the recent centre-state tensions during the Covid-19 Pandemic suggest that the centralization of power is not a panacea, as being portrayed by the government for Mission Karmayogi. The DoPT recently tested the i-GOT platform for the COVID-19 Pandemic to train over 12 lakh frontline workers, support staff, and doctors on Covid-19 and health-related courses. The government is selling this as the trial run for the platform aimed at over two crore public service officials. There is an inherent mismatch between the two which may prove fatal for implementing the targeted sector. For the pandemic, the skills offered on the platform are particular to a single group of problems, and the workers already have an existing pool of knowledge of medicine and public health. As concluded by most educational institutions and universities globally, distance self-learning is helpful in additional skill-building and updating knowledge. Still, it may not be suitable for the core development of expertise. Most of the public service officials targeted under this scheme have been "working in silos", which our government has agreed upon. Distance self-learning is plagued with issues of feedback mechanism, a space for clarifying doubts, mentorship facility, and peer learning, all of which are crucial for field-based work. Talking more about the recent training of health workers, especially for rural women, we observe that they preferred residential training rather than an online one. An online mode of training might be disadvantageous and disempowering for constrained and vulnerable grassroots-level employees. The capacity building should, hence, also look out to the capacity building of these frontline workers. Another issue with a centralized pool of knowledge comes from a functionalist perspective. Since the current system has persisted for years, it must be fulfilling some purpose, and this purpose is more than just bribery and corruption. The assessment of training at the local or organizational level, as is the current situation in most cases, requires precise estimation of current knowledge, skills, and a comprehensive understanding of the population's wants. This mission needs to find ways for the relevant department to strengthen investments in training their employees rather than just a plan for goal setting, annual plans, and financial plans. We need, in the end, the implementation of the programs for performance.

Organizational culture

Most reform programs have failed to improve service delivery. These programs get absorbed in the organization itself while the organizational norms and learning culture remains unchanged. The culture in which competence and innovation are to be amalgamated is as influential as the objective itself. Bureaucratic norms are the unwritten rules that guide public officials and can profoundly influence the ability of states to implement policies successfully. Although all public agencies work under the same national policy framework, formal administrative structures, and democratic institutions, they operate according to different norms, which have real-life implications. There is a dire need to pay more attention to bureaucratic norms and identifying the normative environment in which public agencies operate. Organizational cultures and norms, owing to their inherent design, produce rhetoric of demotivation and apathy. It yields poor outcomes on assessment and address of needs at the last mile. The problem is often coupled with disproportionate efforts. Credible decentralization and training curriculum are keys to empowering and simulating last-mile action and sustaining sporadic sparks of creativity and leadership. Changing norms and morale within the administration and Indian bureaucracy cannot be done alone by formulating and enacting rights for citizens or outlining roles and responsibilities of the last-mile services in written government guidelines using Information and Communication Technology. It mandates a cognitive shift where the administration sees itself differently from citizens and recognizes their responsibilities. It demands an alignment of individual sense of achievement with bigger organizational goals. We cannot run new sophisticated software such as “*rights and technology*” on old shaky hardware predicted rules. (Aiyar & Bhattacharya, 2016). Organizations are primarily responsible through faster problem-solving, trust, a strong sense of mission, participation, and a shared professional norm.

Motivation

All policies attempting to reform the civil services system will not achieve their desired outcome unless the employees are actively motivated to receive and contribute to the proposed changes. Managing human resource management has been highlighted significantly in the business culture, and bureaucracy has been recognizing its strength lately. A major fallback in the motivation is due to the structural factor arising from an informal hierarchy of jobs. Saxena in 2012 points out that even after having the same pay-scale and statutory provisions, some posts are deemed better than others. For example, posts in the industrial or commercial departments are considered superior to tribal and minority affairs. It originates from the scope of increasing one's connections and using influence on trading favours in the former departments. At the same time, such an opportunity of a “*quid pro quo*” is absent in the latter. As George Orwell in his allegorical book *Animal Farm* remarks, “*All animals are equal, but some are more equal than others.*” This unofficial gradation of jobs indicates the harsh reality of bureaucrats being alienated from the public and its needs. Specialization in a domain, the main idea of the Mission Karmayogi, requires a healthy personnel policy. Due to the informal hierarchy, most officers might tend to specialize in sectors offering maximum benefits rather than sectors requiring immediate help from administration like the welfare of weaker sections, watershed development, animal husbandry, etc. Prior work on this issue has suggested that programs are under-implemented due to an absence of clear and consistent oversight of bureaucrats by politicians. Other work suggests that bureaucrats may be intrinsically motivated, and that flexible

bureaucratic norms, managerial autonomy, and organizational capacity are critical for the effective bureaucratic implementation of programs. A lack of motivation also causes a lack of professionalism in the civil servants. They spend more than half of their tenure in policy tasks where domain knowledge ideally is a vital prerequisite, but there is no incentive for them to acquire knowledge. Further, the creation of redundant posts over the years has given them a pseudo-security of promotion. This uncalled division of work dilutes the power and efficiency. For example, the number of joint secretaries in departments of government has been increasing significantly. Although done initially to avoid demoralization due to a lack of scope for promotions in departments, it has the exact opposite effect by making it a cut-throat competition. There are two critical external clinchers for internal motivation for work, goal setting and job design. Goal setting has significant implications on the productivity and performance of an employee. Job design is based on three fundamental psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and performance. If these three needs are fulfilled, employees are more likely to be motivated and internalize the goal of the national policy along with its goals and objectives. All of these pull down the motivation of an employee. Given the online mode of learning that Mission Karmayogi offers unless it attempts to raise the motivation of the employees, it will just add to the bureaucratic overload of the employees.

Accountability and transparency

The idea of accountability of civil services has been internal and upwards since the colonial period. The British believed that if corruption is controlled on the topmost level, it would not be a significant issue, even if it persists at the lower levels. The whole weight of corruption was on the public, of which the British raj was negligent. The situations have changed now. The internal and upward structure is no longer effective. Although our constitution provides for accountability through legislature review and legal system, it is not sufficiently compelling. For greater accountability, the system now needs outward accountability. Most policies face an implementation failure due to power asymmetry and imbalance between the state and the citizens. The Right to Information Act, 2005 was a significant move in this regard, but RTI can only build an external pressure and stimulate demand for reforms. It essentially demands a deepening of democracy through ensuring citizens of enough space to place accountability claims. One of the most misused terms in the Indian political circus, which includes the bureaucracy, is 'public interest.' This term is used to cover "*mala fide*" intentions of the officials under the name of the interest of the larger public, who has no say in the decision-making process. Thus, transparency and accountability, values the Mission wants to inculcate and emphasize in the civil services, can only be ensured if the external and internal pressures are proportional and calibrated. If transparency and accountability are ignored, the situation might turn into a Game of Thrones, with the government stalling their trusted civil service officers instead of the most meritorious ones.

A Thick Perspective

Anthropologist Clifford Geertz in 1973, building on the idea of Gilbert Ryle, popularised the idea of the thick ethnographic method as opposed to the traditional thin method of the Weberian bureaucracy. The thick method focuses on describing an event (e.g., "*Modi won the elections*"), characterization of the context of the actions, and the surroundings as to why Modi

win the elections and the socio-political situations around the time frame. This approach helps us include subjectivity in our approach.

The economic aspect of any organization is governed by a “*Principal-Agent*” model where the principal attempts to induce the agent to those actions that promote the principal’s interests. This model can analyse the structure of compensation in many organizations, a target encompassed in the Mission Karmayogi.

Mission Karmayogi can use the thick information to reach quality performance by maintaining a few parameters. The ethnographic model of thick information is best for organizations with many small units having narrow boundaries of firms with an arms-length and networked relationship for vertical and horizontal integration of the system. The program can utilize the thick dimension for performance accountability through long-term observation. An essential feature of the thick approach is that it is not contractible. As the famous band Blackstreet points out, “*Money can’t buy me love*,” because a contractual delivery of love is not judicable and quantifiable by a third party. It is not equivalent to claim that love is non-existent or unimportant. On the contrary, it highlights that we cannot use arm-length contracts or top-down mechanical commands to produce such a subjective concept. The exact analogy fits into the values like creativity, honesty, innovativeness, probity, and compassion. Mission Karmayogi, hence, might face a hard time evaluating these thick concepts from a thin perspective.

As James Scott points out in his book, “*Seeing like a state*,” in 1998, many of the bureaucratic schemes to improve the human condition fail because they are state-initiated and consequently adopt a “*bureaucratic high modern approach*.” It results in namesake work which is incapable of inducing a change in the structure. India has faced a similar issue in the Mid-Career Training Program of 2007, where attendance was a significant issue due to a flaw in the approach.

A significant reason for the lack of motivation in civil servants is the low-powered nature of the contract as once confirmed in their civil services position. Their salary is weakly and negligently related to their performance and competence. It is a significant deterrent to augmenting the capacity of civil servants in India.

Isomorphism in this context refers to norms in various environments that are derived from ideas and values in one set of circumstances. Extensive literature discusses isomorphic mimicry in organizational strategies. Mimetic mimicry is copying through observation. Normative mimicry is adopting approaches and practices as the desirable norm and is essentially internalized in the organization’s culture. Coercive mimicry is the forcing of rules on other actors as a condition for cooperation (Pritchett, 2014). Normative mimicry pressures are often visible in the external assistance to an organization. Mission Karmayogi aims to induce work culture through normative mimicry but hints at using coercive mimicry too.

Building on the education sector, as our Mission also emphasizes learning, the primary education sector has some insights to offer. The government launched the District Information System for Education (DISE) in 2001. It was a glaring example of how isomorphic mimicry seeps into a system. The introduced system could tell us where we stand, a thin perspective, without any reference to any learning indicator, the thick understanding. It tracked dozens of indicators of minimal parameters. These performance indicators do not show the true picture of the issue. These are thin parameters, which officials can bureaucratically monitor, but the whole purpose of the exercise is being defeated. It shows the mismatch between actual and system design. It is this pressure of isomorphism that simply assumes achieving forms and thin inputs can produce desired outcomes. Given the case of self-learning in the iGOT platform proposed by

the government, the Capacity Building Commission must ensure that the natural pressure of mimicry from various existing training schemes should not result in an isomorphism.

CONCLUSION

Mission Karmayogi is a bold initiative of Government of India to democratize the training process and puts everyone on the same playing field. This mission emphasizes the servant part in the acclaimed civil services. It attempts to address the issues in the existing system, such as complexity and red-tapism, through a capacity-building initiative working at an individual, institutional, and procedural level. The training of employees is a crucial part of their work tenure, but it is only limited to certain topmost services. The 89% of bureaucrats who are in direct touch with the public receive fragmented and sub-par training. Through a bottom-up approach and digitized way of working and training, it attempts to end the work-silo culture of the bureaucracy. Mission Karmayogi aims to cover 46 lakhs employees of the central government within its purview. The government plans to spend INR 510.86 crore over five years, from FY 2021-22 to FY 2024-25. External accountability and transparency must be crucial for more excellent responsiveness. Improved information systems can ensure this, responsibility for inputs, better audit, publishing the entire budget summarised and track records related to this mission by each department “*suo motto*”, and a more robust performance evaluation system. Mission Karmayogi is India’s first robust mission to reform civil services and empower them to deliver services effectively and efficiently. It must deal with many issues and tensions. This mission can sail through all these shortcomings if the program is powered with an extended vision and fuelled by constant motivation.

ENDNOTE

1. The 70-20-10 model is where 70% of the learning comes from experience, experiment, and reflection from an individual; 20% is derived from peer learning, and 10% comes from formal constructs and bound learning inputs.

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