Capacity Constraints of Civil Service Leadership

An overview of the training and development of higher civil services in India

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ABSTRACT

The dawn of independence for India in 1947 led to a flurry of activities by the government to expedite the process of modernisation and nation-building and the responsibility was promptly shouldered by the civil services of the day considered to be the steel frame known for its vigour, vitality, impartiality and effectiveness. Although the civil services were inexperienced in the concept of a welfare state, they have come out with flying colours both in stabilising the fluid and turbulent society, economy and polity and also propelling the growth and development from vanguard; all of which necessitated constant and continuous learning on the part of civil services through training and development activities.

The research provides an overview of the role of training and development activities with specific reference to training institutions, training activities and training curriculum, of the higher civil services in India in enhancing their capacity in the formulation and execution of public policies and also critically focus the areas which have incapacitated the system as a whole in delivering public services to the citizens of the country. The article intends to bring out the issues pertaining to the needs of the civil servants in the era of a liberal and global world where the citizen expects better and qualitative services and the role that can be played by the training and development activities towards the fulfilment of the goals. The article discusses the content, pedagogy, effectiveness, review and the present state of training in civil services. The article endeavours to present the civil service training in India in international perspective and offers suggestions to make it relevant to the present day needs of a developmental state.

INTRODUCTION

The challenge of revitalising the role of public administration in the developmental state is not only complex but multidimensional as there are myriad players whose interests are pulled in different directions. The role and importance of public administration as a tool for ameliorating the living conditions of the people has been accepted since the hoary past. Its relevance has come under scrutiny in the liberal and a global world with the advent of non-state actors slicing away a major chunk of those developmental activities which have been hitherto conducted by the state and its agencies. Be it imparting e.g. education, supply of drinking water or laying a road, the role of non-state actors has increased tremendously. Even the combined role of such non-state actors can never replace the state and public administration. Government becomes the common agency through which mutual interests can be explored and preserved and competing interests adjusted. Administration is the means by which these policy adjustments are made effective. (White) In this context the role of public administration has not diminished, but still remains intact, particularly in developmental states.

The state assumes a great number of functions which cannot be performed by any other actor and will not be less relevant in a globalised world. The emphasis placed by Wilson on the public administration is no less significant when he stated that administration is the most obvious part of government, and it is government in action (Wilson, Woodrow 1887). Wilson was right in the sense that despite the advent of any player, the role and relevance of public administration did not weather the shine and sheen of public administration. Public administration is a profession that offers an unusually rich variety of opportunities to make moral or immoral decisions, to make ethical or unethical choices, to do good or evil things to people. (Henry 2003).

The roles of higher civil services has increased in both the process of policy formulation and its execution and also the enunciation of the Millennium Development Goals by the United Nations (MDGs) for liberating millions of lives from abject poverty and catapult them towards better lives. The way the higher civil services are fine tuned to the developmental needs of a country has also assumed importance. The issues to be addressed as a part of the MDGs include poverty and hunger, universal education, gender equality, child health, maternal health, HIV/AIDS, environmental sustainability and global partnerships. Apart from the accomplishment of MDGs, education and training for the public leadership capacity building and training of administrators at various administration levels are important for the realisation of an accountable, transparent, effective and efficient public service (UNDESA 2007). It is in this context that the capacity and constraints of civil service leadership with specific reference to the training and development of higher civil services in India are elaborated from a three dimensional model called 3P Model (3PM).

THE 3P MODEL OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND TRAINING IN INDIA

Any administrative system is a by product of its larger socio-political system and is heavily influenced by its ancient past and expectations in the future. The Indian administrative system

is not an exception of such a phenomenon wherein the administrative system is impacted by its past, present and future. The nature of public administration and its ethos are manifested in all the activities for nation building and building the public administration system itself, including recruitment, training, performance evaluation, promotion, remuneration.

Before taking a leap into the training of higher civil services in India, it is necessary to understand the 3P Model (3PM) of the public administration system and its impact on the training and development programmes of higher civil services in India. The 3P Model refers to the evolution of public administration system in India. The first phase being public administration, followed by public management and finally it is public governance. The 3P Model reflects the three stages of the evolution of the public administration in India and the exhibition of corresponding changes and nature of the characteristic features of each system from time to time and its impact on the larger society. The 3P Model of public administration in India refers to the nature of public administration and the ethos with which it carries out the mandate given by the political system. In the 3P Model, P refers to the prefix 'public' which has been attached to words like administration, management and governance. In all the attachments, the word *public* has remained intact and this is what the writer wants to focus on i.e. the public part of public administration, public management and public governance. The purposes of revitalising public administration must be linked to its overall purposes, namely, to support the goals of the state in promoting economic development, improving social conditions and overall well-being, and strengthening the rule of law — thus, to bring the *public* back into public administration. (Committee of Experts on Public Administration Report 2004)

The classification of public administration into different phases has been done in the past by many authors among whom the classification of Shabbir Cheema comes close to the 3P Model. Shabbir Cheema has proposed four phases of public administration over the past 50 years which are: public administration as a set of state structures, institutions and processes marked by hierarchy, continuity, impartiality, standardisation, legal-rational authority and professionalism; public management focused on the application of management principles including efficiency in utilisation of resources, effectiveness, customer orientation, reliance on market forces and greater sensitivity to public needs; New Public Management focussing on outcome-oriented partnerships between the public and the private sector to provide services to citizens marked with flexibility, empowerment, business principles, professional ethics and performance management; and finally governance as a system of values, policies, and institutions by which a society manages its economic, social and political affairs through interactions within and among the state, civil society and private sector (Cheema, Shabbir 2005). However, there seems to be not much difference between the second and third phases; hence they can be combined into one under the banner of New Public Management. Thus, one can have three broad models of public administration: Public Administration, Public Management and Public Governance, each of the models representing a set of unique characteristic features different from the other models.

While elaborating upon the nature of public administration, White states that public administration consists of all those operations having for their purpose the fulfilment or enforcement of public policy (White 2007) Wilson too subscribes to the view of executing public policy while defining public administration when he stated that public administration is a detailed and systematic execution of pubic law. Every particular application of general

law is an act of administration. It can be stated that public administration in the first stage represents state structures, institutions and processes and in this state, the administrative practices are more rule-oriented, strict hierarchy, secrecy, less accountability, obsolete personnel practices where the focus is more on a lecture method, which in itself is a reflection of stifling the thinking and creativity of the participants.

In the second phase of public management, the role of public administration differed from that of the first phase in the sense that there was more emphasis on the managerial aspect, appropriately termed as public management. The Fulton Report of UK (1968) and the Civil Service Reform Act of US (1978) are pointers towards this trend wherein the differences between public and private sectors are narrowed down to some extent. The advent of public management marks a shift from earlier reforms. Instead of being a technical specialisation within public administration, as *old public management,* public management now aims at the replacement of the traditional model altogether (Hughes 2003).

Governance probably from a broad perspective, as viewed by the Planning Commission of India is that

> *Governance relates to the management of all such processes that, in any society, define the environment which permits and enables individuals to raise their capability levels on the one hand, and provide opportunities to realize their potential and enlarge the set of available choices, on the other. It covers the State, civil society and the market (10th Five Year Plan, Government of India).*

The 10th Five Year Plan has conceptualised the governance model in which there are three important elements: public institutions; the delivery mechanism; and the supportive framework of legislations; rules and laws. Going by the governance model, *public governance is all about stakeholder involvement through equitable access to opportunities to learning and development with the state playing the role of a facilitator with the other players also playing an active role in the amelioration of the living conditions of poor and striving towards a decent standard of living.* The classification of public administration into different phases (Table No. 1) is elaborated below with its unique characteristic features.

Table 1 Classification of Public Administration in India

	Public Administration	Public Management	Public Governance
Information	Not accessible	Partial accessibility	Free accessibility
Application of rules	Efficiency	Effectiveness	Equity
Civil service orientation	Bossism	Consumerism	Partner
Personnel administration	Archaic	Performance	Progressive
Accessibility	Less	More	Very much
Concentration of power	Centralised	Decentralised	Scattered
Citizen participation	Negligible	Certain outlets	More outlets
Training orientation	Compliance	Change	Consensus

The 3P Model of public administration in India is a pointer to the behavioural, structural and procedural dimensions reflected by the system as a whole in its day to day activities. This may be e.g. in the process of policy formulation, policy execution, policy analysis, citizen empowerment, citizen participation and also in the personnel administration, the way the civil servants are recruited, trained and evaluated. The most important characteristic feature of public personnel administration is training which provides the necessary inputs to the newly trained civil servants and also provides the much needed impetus for the experienced individuals in the system. However, as stated earlier, the characteristic features of the 3P Model of public administration is also reflected in the manner in which training programmes are conceived, designed and delivered for the higher civil services in India, particularly the probationers of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS).

HIGHER CIVIL SERVICE TRAINING IN INDIA

The advent of a modern civil service system in India can be dated back to the colonial rule of the British government with an intention of collection of revenue and maintenance of law and order. However, the fundamental flaw of the administrative system was that the powers and privileges enjoyed in the execution of public policies were unrestricted. The executive was not answerable to the legislature. However, independence brought a new era of hope among society spread across the length and breadth of the country and also led to increasing expectations from the executive arm of the government. A new set of qualities and qualifications for the higher civil servants were needed who were a part of policy formulation and policy execution of India. They were expected to shoulder the responsibility of nation building and development and also arm itself from time to time to meet the emerging challenges in the process of nation building.

While referring to the importance of governmental leadership, Allan Rosenbaum emphasises that such leadership does not spontaneously emerge in most instances. Rather, in most cases, such leadership is developed over a long period of time and only as a consequence of continued significant efforts at strengthening the knowledge and skills base of the individuals involved (UNESCO 2002). This is where the role of the training institutions, trainers, content and pedagogy come into picture as they play an important role in imparting those critical inputs during the training phase. These can go a long way in delivering the goods and services to the people not only with effectiveness and efficiency but also equitably.

The Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pension is the nodal ministry dealing with the personnel administration of the Government of India. The Training Division of the Ministry administers induction training to recruits to the Indian Administrative Service and other All India Services and Central Services. The Training Division has also been co-ordinating the implementation of the National Training Policy which was adopted in April 1996.

The objective which has been emphasised in the National Training Policy is to strive to achieve the following objectives:

- keeping up-to-date and enhancing professional knowledge and skills needed for better performance of individuals and organisations;

- promoting better understanding of professional requirements as well as sensitisation to the professional, socioeconomic and political environment in which work is done; and
- bringing about right attitudinal orientation.

Apart from these objectives, the training programmes are expected to focus on responsiveness, commitment, awareness and accountability of the civil servants.

The Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA), Mussoorie is the premier training institution for the higher civil services in India. The Academy imparts induction level and in service training for regular recruits to the Indian Administrative Service (IAS). The Academy also conducts in-service training courses for members of the IAS and officers promoted to the IAS from the State Civil Services, as well as workshops and seminars on policy issues. The Academy is now increasingly moving toward a modular format of training.

Some of the modules conducted are: administrative accountability, underpinning the need to be more accessible, accountable and transparent; self-awareness, covering areas of personal ethics and behavior; principles and issues in ethics, including ethics and administration; leadership qualities and motivation; social sector; poverty and its manifestation, and the government programmes; and issues in gender . There is, however, a constant and underlying emphasis in all academic and co-curricular inputs to drive home the message of being non-arrogant, more accessible and humane in their approach to the citizens.
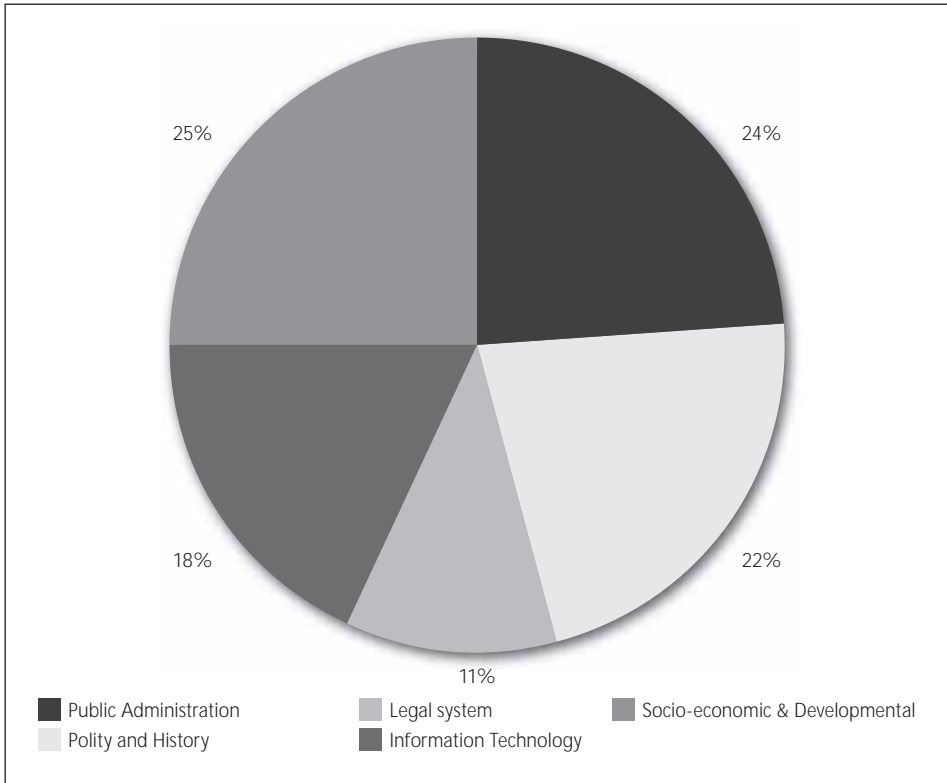
CONTENT AND FOCUS OF FOUNDATION COURSE FOR IAS PROBATIONERS

The LBSNAA is the premier institute providing training for the newly recruited probationers in the form of foundation and professional courses. The experienced civil servants who have gained sufficient experience in the civil service system in the form of in-service training are also accommodated. A cursory glance of the foundation course of the IAS probationers brings to the fore the stark reality of training programmes conceived for those who are expected to design and execute policies for enhancing the lives of the millions of people in the country.

The focus of any training programme aimed at the higher civil services should emphasise the holistic development of the participants so as to enable them to have a broader perspective of the activities they carry out. However, the foundational training imparted to the probationers is aimed not to carry out the developmental goals, but to carry out the administrative goals of the political system and apply rules and laws judiciously and rationally, thereby nullifying the creative potential of the probationers. The objectives of the foundational course and the professional course of the IAS probationers clearly spell out the focus of making the higher civil servants passive in the application of laws, conform to the existing administrative patterns, learn a language of their posting, develop camaraderie among themselves and focus on physical health.

With such objectives in mind, it is naïve to expect the higher civil service to deliver the basic goods and services to the society without forgetting the higher developmental goals of

Figure 1 Training Modules of Foundation Course of IAS Probationers

Public Administration

Polity and History

Legal system

Information Technology

Socio-economic & Developmental

decent standard of life. There is little reference to human development, civil service ethics, welfare orientation, provision of basic services to people, peoples' participation, *panchayati raj* and local government. Most of the topics are focused on politico-legal and computer technologies.

If one were to categorise the contents of foundational course and the professional course of the IAS probationers five broad categories emerge (Fig. No. 1) *viz. public administration, polity and history, legal system, information technology and finally socio-economic and developmental.* The most important elements pertaining to the democratic values and ethos like peoples' participation, women empowerment, provision of basic services to the poor, uplifting the downtrodden sections of the society, strengthening of local government bodies, civil-citizen interface, grievance redress of the citizens and accountability of the civil servants towards the citizens, are conspicuously missing from the training curriculum. These issues are of utmost importance for any public administrative system which intends to serve the citizens in a better way.

The focus of the training programme is more oriented towards preparing the civil servants who can apply the rules and public polices judiciously and rationally rather than preparing them to have a first hand information of the needs and goals of a democratic system which exists at three levels, central, state and local. The training programme is missive in the areas like citizen participation and enhancing responsiveness to the needs of the citizens.

They have inbuilt all those topics which make the civil servants to opt for an *independent island approach* where they are least concerned with the efficacy and efficiency of both the formulation and the execution of the public policies. They tend to forget about equity and ethics.

Instead of focusing on building a more humane administrative system, the focus is on teaching topics like MS Word, MS PowerPoint, which is bizarre as the probationers who have passed an examination meant to select those who can govern the country at the highest level are taught the basics of computer knowledge. Inserting the content only for the sake of making the content more broad based will not work as the content should be more helpful to the probationers to enhance the service delivery system.

The contents of the training programme for the probationers is a pointer to the fact that the training programmes are in sync with the existing public administration system which is in the first stage of the 3P Model. The heavy focus on teaching polity and history and the elements of the public administration system coupled with the legal system is a pointer to the fact that orientation of the training is more towards compliance of the existing rules i.e. imbibing in them the bureaucratic culture of bossism, application of archaic rules under the garb of efficiency, keeping the citizens at bay and tightening the system to ensure that the citizen does not get the much needed information. There seems to be a heavy dependence on teaching the elements of polity, administration and law on the one hand and IT tools on the other hand which are expected to crush the creative spirits of the probationers. The Task Force on Standards of Excellence for Public Education and Training, while referring to the curriculum, emphasised that the training curriculum should enhance competencies, values, knowledge, and skills to act ethically, equitably, effectively and efficiently. However, such an emphasis is found to be missing in both the foundation course and the professional course of the IAS probationers.

Pedagogy of the training programmes

The success rate of any training programme depends to a large extent on the way it is designed and delivered rather than any other extraneous factors. Most of the times it is a combination of different methods like lecture, case study, exercise, games, with which a training programme is delivered. Each method has its own advantages and disadvantages and symbolises the attitude of the trainer towards the trainees i.e. whether the former intends to treat the latter as matured individuals who can learn through participation and unleash their inner potential or intends to treat them as mere passive learners by not allowing them to speak and heavily depending on monologue type of session.

The HCM Rajasthan State Institute of Public Administration boasts a highly participative method of training although the traditional methods also continue to be important in all the training courses. Apart from that, the Institute utilises various techniques like audio-visuals, films, slides, management games, in various training programmes. However, the LBSNAA, the pioneer in the training activities of the higher civil services in India, has still an inclination towards the lecture method. This is conspicuously visible in the foundational course for the probationers. The lecture method seems to be an important tool for training the IAS probationers followed by exercise and case study. If one was to glance at the foundation course and the profession course of the IAS probationers, the term lecture appears 57 times

and case study 16 times which is a pointer to the fact that participants are expected to be mere passive learners during the probationary period.

The case study method is the most popular one considering its advantages over the other methods, albeit it too has some limitations. The case study method not only enables the participants to think, ponder and purpose solutions but also enables the participants to identify themselves with the situations. In fact, most of the good business schools follow the case study method.

The lecture method probably is not appropriate to the individuals who are expected to fill the highest positions both at the state and central level. Probably this is the reason that the training has failed to evoke positive response from the participants. As expected, training arranged within the country does not evoke even a fraction of the enthusiasm reserved for one abroad, preferably in the West (Maheshwari 2001). The Task Force on Standards of Excellence for Public Education and Training, while setting standards for the public administration education and training, focused on the balance between theory and practice and the use of multiple teaching methods including *evidence-based*. However, such an emphasis is found to be missing in both the design and the delivery of the programme.

The heavy emphasis on the lecture method is again in sync with the first stage of the evolution of public administration in India where the focus is more on rote learning of the concepts and theories of the administrative system. The participants are expected to accept the divine words coming from people who have been manning the administrative system with due adherence to rules and stifled creativity. Thus making officials run from pillar to post in providing the required information and with a firm belief in the archaic personnel system which has nurtured the feeling of superiority *vis a vis* the citizens. The lecture method is a symbol of passing on the information from theories and books which has little relevance to ameliorating the living conditions of society.

The case study method is in sync with the second phase of 3P Model which *inter alia* emphasises on thinking, logic, rationality, discussion, sharing, and debate. These make the civil servants more mature and logical both in the formulation of the policies and in the execution. It also enables them make way for citizen participation at appropriate levels in the process of delivering goods and services to society.

Trainers of the training programme

The most important element of any training programme is a trainer who can breathe life into the training programme by properly designing and delivering it to enhance the potential of the participants in the delivery of goods and services to the stakeholders in the execution of public policy. The LBSNAA which has a faculty strength of 17 has only four who have earned their doctorate degrees. Out of 17 faculty members, 12 are from the civil service *i.e.*, serving officers. With such a heavy tilt towards the serving officers there is a possibility that the entire training ethos– foundation course, professional course and in-service training programmes – may be a one-sided affair.

Yashwantrao Chavan Academy of Development Administration, Pune, caters for the training needs of higher civil servants of the state government of Maharashtra. However, out of more than 60 faculty members and about 20 administrative staff of the Institute, only 10 faculty members have earned doctorate degrees, which is a serious bottleneck in the

research activities of the Institute. Without any research activity, there is a tendency on the part of the training institutes to design and deliver the courses which are routine and mundane. It might even fail to evoke positive response and learning from the participants and forget about the application of *newly learnt knowledge* during the training programmes. Any training programme catering for the needs of the civil servants need to undertake research activities to design and deliver training programmes which are intended for the stakeholders in the most realistic sense.

HCM Rajasthan State Institute of Public Administration is a premier institute for training the higher civil services of the state of Rajasthan. The Institute has not fully succeeded as only five faculty members have doctorate degrees and that for a state catering for the training needs of the civil servants serving a population of 56,51 million people with more than 15% of the population leading their lives below the poverty line.

Taking a cue from such a state of affairs, the Department of Training, Government of India has started providing the necessary support to the state level training institutes by strengthening them in various domains of management. The objective of the initiative is to strengthen the state level training institutes so that they are capable to undertake approved training programmes. In the year 2004-05, the Department of Training has conducted 45 modules in different functional areas. Apart from those programmes, 489 programmes were conducted at various state government training institutes. In 2005-06, the initiative was taken further wherein the an attempt was made to cover all the functional domains like IT, governance, disaster management, financial planning, ethics, gender issues, which are of utmost important for higher civil servants at both the central and state level (2005-2006). During the year 2007-08, apart from focusing on different domains of the training, the Right to Information too has made its way into the training programmes (2007-2008). Such initiatives on the part of the Department of Training under the banner, Trainer Development Programme (Fig. No. 2) have helped the state level training institutes to enhance their overall domain expertise in conducting training programmes for the higher civil services at state level.

**Figure 2** Trainer Development Programmes
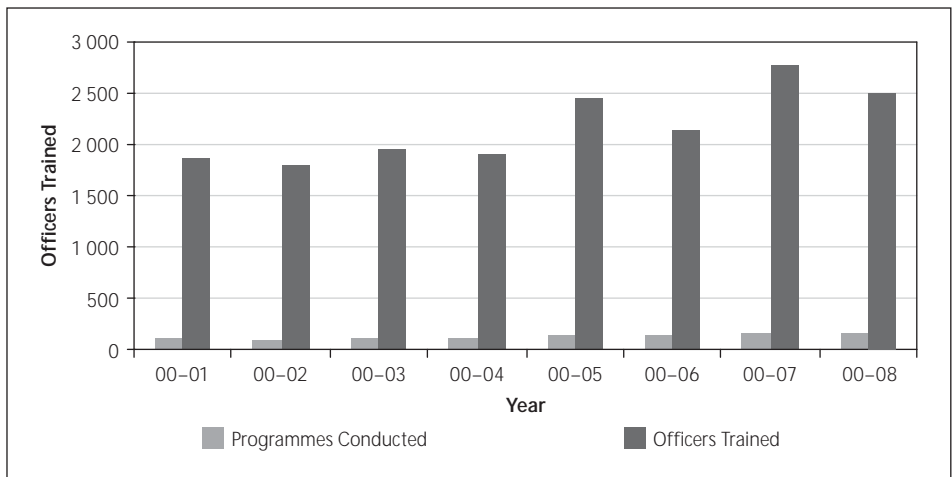
Frequency of training

Two major training institutions directly under the administrative control of the Department of Training are the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA), Mussoorie and the Institute of Secretariat Training and Management (ISTM), New Delhi. The former is mainly responsible for providing induction training to recruits to the Indian Administrative Service and other All India Services and Central Services. The Institute of Secretariat Training and Management provides induction as well as in-service training to members of the Central Secretariat Service. The Department of Training is the nodal agency for the training of civil services in India. Apart from co-ordinating such training activities, it also nominates the civil servants for foreign training programmes (Annual Report 2004-05)

The Department caters to the needs of the civil servants in the form of in-service training for IAS officers consisting of one week training programmes on a range of subjects, and two week training programmes with a different focus for three different levels of seniority of officers. During the year 2004-05, 13 two week in-service training programmes were conducted on the topics ranging from Programme Implementation; Management Concepts; Decision making; and Policy Planning and Analysis.

In the same year 25 one week in-service training programmes were conducted. During the year 2005-06, 13 two week in-service training programmes and 21 one week training programmes were conducted. During the year 2007-08, 27 one week in-service training programmes were conducted by the Department for the serving officers. Such in-service training programmes do not seem to meet the requirements of the higher civil service if one should take into consideration the total number of IAS officers as on 31 December 2003 which stood at 4 791. Therefore, there is a need for increasing the number of in-service training programmes for the higher civil service and rope in the premier management institutes. (Fig. No. 3)

Figure 3 Number of In-service Training Programmes for IAS Officers
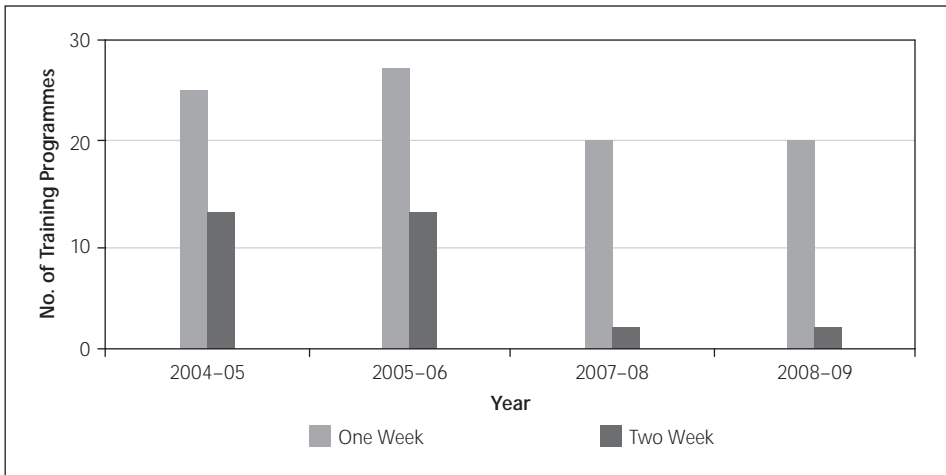
CONCLUSION

The Task Force on Standards of Excellence for Public Education and Training has come out with a few standards of excellence for public administration education and training. One of them is the advocacy of public interest values. However, the training philosophy of the higher civil services in India seems to be in sync with the evolution of the 3P model of the public administration system. There is an urgent need to deploy training as a strategic tool and resources to unleash the capacities and competencies of the participants of the training programmes of the higher civil services both at the central and the state level. Thus training could be taken one step forward from the public administration phase to public management phase. The focus is more on enhancing the service delivery rather than mere compliance to the rules, wider use of case study and other methods rather than emphasis on the lecture method, enlarging the list of faculty members from not only civil service but also private sector and non-profit organisations and finally enhance the number of qualitative programmes which can make the civil servants to add value to the lives of millions of downtrodden sections of the society rather than adding value to a few sections of the society.

Mishra, R.K. (2007) opined that training institutes should change their basic character. They should promote need based training programmes and formulate their training goals on the basis of the product approach. They should promote the concept of networking to pool faculty resources. The pedagogy should shift in favour of field research/action research. It is with such a shift that training programmes can be made more oriented towards the needs of the development administration by enabling the trainees not only to learn, but also think about the *ifs and buts* of both the formulation and execution of the public policies. However, the onus lies on the training institutes and the trainers to move from a public administration model to a public management model and eventually to a public governance model, so that the process of development is smooth and without any hindrance on the part of the civil service leaders.

ENDNOTE

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