

Mission Karmayogi A silent revolution

“The government has started Mission Karmayogi and Capacity Building Commission to increase people-centric approach in bureaucracy and improve their efficiency”



MISSION KARMAYOGI

A silent revolution

R. Balasubramaniam

Member-HR, Capacity Building Commission

Evolution of Civil services in a post independent India

In a young and continuously evolving democracy like India, Civil Services have remained at the epicenter of all government activities both as the agents of policymaking as well as the executive hand that delivers and implements those policies on-ground. When India became independent, our global share of the GDP was less than 2% and our social and economic condition was quite adverse. In such a situation, the Indian state had to rise to the occasion and provide welfare to India's citizens, so that they could achieve a basic standard of living. The agents of the state, i.e. the civil servants, had to adapt themselves to this reality. Under British rule, civil servants had mastered their role of maintaining law and order and collecting tax revenue from the population that were seen as subjects of the Crown. Now, they had to become effective providers of welfare to fellow citizens. They played this role until the late 1980s and the early 1990s. The extent to which the Indian state succeeded in enhancing welfare during this phase may be debatable, but there can be no doubt that the state was the dominant force in the Indian polity during this era. By the early 1990s, another reality emerged: India decided to embrace liberalization, privatization, and globalization, and it became necessary for the state to transform from being a provider of welfare to being a provisioner of services.

Today, we are at another crossroads; a new world is emerging before our eyes. Three forces are shaping this new world. First, with the rise of information and communication technology, we are becoming ever more inter-connected globally. Young Indians living in small towns and villages are connected to the wider world, which is shaping their aspirations and desires. India's citizens today are no longer content to passively receive benefits from a mai baap sarkar; they are instead actively making claims on the state, and feel empowered to shape how the state affects their lives. Second, this more informed citizenry is giving shape to a more mature political system, one in which politicians from across the spectrum recognize the importance of delivering on their campaign promises of better health, education, and social benefits. These two forces have led to a sharper focus on citizen-centricity, citizen engagement, and citizen partnership, which the Prime Minister has called Jan Bhagidari. Finally, the development of new technologies is also opening up possibilities for governance that did not exist 10 or even 5 years ago, and it is incumbent upon the state to leverage these emerging technologies to

deliver the maximum good for the maximum number of people, while minimizing the harms resulting from these technologies.

These forces herald a new phase in the evolution of the Indian state – from being a provider and a provisioner state, to becoming a ‘partnership state.’ Our response to the COVID-19 pandemic exemplified many aspects of this new ‘partnership state.’ At one level, we saw many different arms of the national government rise to the occasion, from the Prime Minister’s Office, to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and many other Ministries, the NITI Aayog, ICMR, NCDC, and other central government organizations. These arms of the national government collaborated effectively with international bodies – such as the WHO, UN, and governments of other countries – and with state governments, bringing out the strength of India’s global relations as well as of its federal structure. Even within states, municipal authorities and the frontline workforce of ASHAs, ANMs, and Anganwadi Workers rose to the occasion and conducted disease surveillance, provided medical care where needed, provided rations and other supplies, and finally carried out the world’s largest vaccination drive. The role played by ASHAs has now been recognized through the WHO’s Global Health Leaders Award .

But it was not just the government. The private sector, civil society organizations, and citizen volunteer groups all joined the effort against the deadly virus. For example, it was Indian private sector companies that produced these vaccines, not just for India, but for the whole world. Civil society organizations and citizen volunteer groups played a major role in providing relief to those hit by the economic effects of the lockdowns, in spreading awareness about the virus, and in engaging in surveillance and related activities. All these parts of society – the government, the citizens, the private sector, the civil society organizations – they all came together as one partnership, as one “Team India”, to fight the virus. This is the true spirit of the ‘partnership state’. India will have to do this on an ongoing basis to collectively combat the challenges of the future, whether it is climate change or pollution or future pandemics or meeting the Sustainable Development Goals.

This new model of the ‘partnership state’ requires new skillsets and new mindsets among India’s civil servants. For example, during the COVID crisis, we already saw how the best civil servants were able to shift their mindset from being followers of rules and orders to being leaders who brought citizens on board by arousing their inner purpose and getting them to commit to this common cause. More generally, as boundaries between ‘government’ and ‘not government’ blur, a new toolbox of collaborative skills will be required, as well as a willingness to admit that the government may not have all the answers. But the government does not need to have all the answers. Its job in this new model of the ‘partnership state’ is to co-create solutions with different stakeholders, such that everyone benefits

¹ <https://www.who.int/news/item/22-05-2022-who-director-general-announces-global-health-leaders-awards>

together. This will bring to life the Prime Minister’s vision of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, and Sabka Prayas. Achieving this vision requires a new understanding of public HR management and of capacity building, and a new articulation of the answer to the perennial question: “capacity building to do what?”

Mission Karmayogi – heralding a new era in public administration in India

This is the fertile ground from which the seeds of Mission Karmayogi emerged from the visionary thinking of Prime Minister Modi. Mission Karmayogi – the National Program for Civil Services Capacity Building (NPCSCB) encapsulates three transitions: the first transition is a change in the mindset of government officials from considering themselves as karmacharis to considering themselves to be karmayogis. The second transition is a change in the workplace, from assigning individual responsibility for performance, to diagnosing the constraints to a civil servant’s performance using the Means, Motives and Opportunity (MMO) framework. The third transition is moving the public HR management system and the corresponding capacity building apparatus from being rule-based to role-based. These three transitions are described in more detail below.

The first transition must occur at the level of the civil servant. Today, many civil servants consider themselves to be mere salaried employees or karmacharis who are cogs in the wheels of the larger government machinery. The Prime Minister wants to see the mindset shift to that of karmayogis, as individuals imbued with the spirit of action, service, and humility. Drawing inspiration from Swami Vivekananda and the national ideals of Seva (service) and Tyaga (sacrifice) that he propounded, each civil servant must see their work as being essential to achieving the larger goals of the government and the nation.

The second transition must occur within governmental units, be it a Ministry or Department or organization or agency. Today, officers are considered responsible for their own performance. But the government can learn from fields like consumer behaviour, social marketing and organisational management, where organizational leaders reflect upon three types of constraints to an individual’s performance²:

- **Motives:** Does the individual want to perform the required role? How inspired is he to engage in public service?
- **Means:** Is the individual capable of performing the required role? Does he have the requisite set of competencies to play his role?
- **Opportunity:** Does the individual get the chance and the support needed to perform the required role? Is he placed in a position and role that his competence is best suited to deliver on?

² <https://gh.bmj.com/content/bmjgh/4/5/e001790.full.pdf>

Answering these questions creates workplace solutions both for the individual and for the managerial environment within the Ministry or the Department. It also helps one understand the constraints and challenges including the different hygiene factors that facilitate or inhibit effective and efficient functioning of the Ministry.

The third transition is a system-wide transition that applies to the public HR management system and the capacity building system as a whole. This is the transition from a rule-based to a role-based HR management system, which empowers officials to develop the skills, knowledge and attitudes that they require to fulfill their roles within the government at all points in their careers, rather than provide them training resources based on one-size-fits-all rules.

Institutional framework for Mission Karmayogi

The Institutional Framework includes four institutions and functional bodies, with representation from the Centre, State and civil society, and oversight from the highest level of political office. The framework keeps in mind principles of stability, sustainability, agility, scalability, and autonomy and will manage the whole-of-government transformation. These are the Prime Minister's Human Resource Council, the Cabinet Secretariat Coordination Unit, the Capacity Building Commission and the SPV Karmayogi Bharat.

Prime Minister's Human Resources Council

The Prime Minister's HR Council (PMHRC) is conceived as the apex body driving and providing strategic direction to the overall civil services reforms. Chaired by the Prime Minister, PMHRC will signal policy interventions, approve the National Capacity Building Plan, and review and provide guidance on reports submitted by other tiers. The Council will also guide the Global Public HR Summit providing inputs on themes, priorities, and international partnerships.

Cabinet Secretariat Coordination Unit

NPCSCB envisions a program coordination function to ease and manage implementation of the reform, monitor its progress, and promote cross-departmental collaboration. Implemented as a Coordination Unit and hosted within the Cabinet Secretariat, it will work to unify the program, align stakeholders, and resolve all issues, ensuring early adoption of capacity building plans within the Union Ministries and Departments. Chaired by the Cabinet Secretary, the Coordination Unit is designed to have representation from the Central and State bureaucracy (including representation from Departments and training institutes).

Capacity Building Commission

Core to the overall institutional framework, the Capacity Building Commission (CBC) is conceived as an independent body with full executive powers and is considered the heart and soul of Mission Karmayogi. Comprising of a three-member Commission and supported by an internal Secretariat, the focus is on driving standardization and harmonization across the capacity building landscape. To ensure independence, members of the Commission will represent the views of different services, State governments, public and private sector practitioners, and academia.

The central purpose of the CBC is to build credibility and shape a uniform approach to capacity building on a collaborative and sharing basis. As the custodian of the overall landscape, CBC will determine the roll-out strategy of the NPCSCB, onboarding different Ministries and Departments, conduct the HR audit of government organizations, ensure functional oversight over all central training institutions and over iGOT, conduct the Global HR Summit, provide policy inputs to DoPT and approve third party training providers.

Karmayogi Bharat – a Special Purpose Vehicle

Integrated Government Online Training (iGOT Karmayogi) is a large-scale comprehensive learning and career management platform, built indigenously in India, to suit the unique needs of the government. The platform creates an environment of continuous, frictionless, and guided learning with tools for networking, peer-to-peer interactions, and career management. Envisaged as a digital platform where a content marketplace enables learning, iGOT Karmayogi will enable tailored competency development for all civil service officials. It will also form the backbone and starting point of linking and amplifying an intelligent government approach to HR management.

Implementing and managing a platform of the complexity and size of iGOT requires a specialized institutional mechanism, with core competency in technology and innovation. Considering the specialist skills and management autonomy needed, the government has instituted a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) termed Karmayogi Bharat, to operate the iGOT Karmayogi platform and any other digital assets pertaining to the Program.

The programmatic approach of Mission Karmayogi

Before outlining the programmatic steps required to achieve the vision of Mission Karmayogi, I want to discuss the idea of a ‘competency’, which is the building block for the new public HR management and capacity building system

imagined by Mission Karmayogi. A competency basically represents a skill or an attitude or knowledge that enables an individual civil servant to perform her role. Competencies can be of three types: behavioral, domain, and functional. For example, let's say we have an officer in NIC whose job is to build websites that citizens would use to access government services. This officer needs to know the coding languages required to create webpages – that's her domain competency. This officer also needs to manage the relationship with the different nodal Ministries for the schemes being accessed through the website. Therefore, 'stakeholder management' and 'project management' are her functional competencies. Finally, throughout the project, the officer needs to demonstrate empathy towards the needs of the citizens who will finally use the website. That's an example of her behavioral competency.

Once we have understood the idea of a competency, we can understand the three specific steps that are being undertaken to achieve Mission Karmayogi's ambitious goals, and how its institutional architecture will come together to deliver on this mission.

The first step in the process is to describe the government's vision for civil service performance. Defining this vision explicitly is important: this vision represents the goal towards which the capacity of the civil service is being built. Given the many stakeholders involved, this has to be a collaborative exercise, one that learns both from international experience and from India's vast history of public administration, and yet is rooted in the practical realities of governing a country as diverse and complex as India. We want this vision to be a practical, tractable and achievable vision and in alignment with the national vision set by the Prime Minister (five trillion dollar inclusive economy, ease of living, citizen-centric delivery of goods and services, Atmanirbhar Bharat, use of emerging technology etc). The Capacity Building Commission has been assigned the task of anchoring this unprecedented effort in India's history, and we are working closely with different Ministries, cadres, and state capacity experts to give shape to this vision.

The second step is to put in place a Framework for Rules, Activities, and Competencies (FRAC) across all the Union Ministries. Through this framework, the Ministry will be able to clearly and explicitly specify the roles and activities associated with each position in the Ministry, and the competencies required to perform those roles and activities well. Doing this is essential to transition the capacity building system from being rule-based to role-based. Currently, most officers receive one-size-fits-all training based on rules, such as their rank or years of experience. Specifying officers' roles and the competencies required to fulfill those roles will enable the Ministry to provide training that's customized for those roles. However, engaging in this activity can be quite an overwhelming task for any Ministry. Therefore, Capacity Building Units (CBUs) are being put in place within each Ministry to support the Ministries with this activity.

The third step, which is happening concurrently, is building the technological infrastructure underpinning the program. The Integrated Government Online Training (iGOT), has been created using open-source digital building blocks developed entirely in India, designed for Indian learning systems. iGOT will own all the digital learning resources that will be used in the capacity building process and we are very proud that the government is benefitting from open source tools developed indigenously by Indian private sector and Indian philanthropic foundations, which exemplifies the true spirit of the partnership state. A version of iGOT is already hosted on NIC's servers, and the platform will be managed by the dedicated SPV company, Karmayogi Bharat that has already been set up. It will also manage onboarding of Departments, approve third party providers, and provide helpdesk assistance. Through marketing activities, the SPV will create a brand for the platform and promote it across all stakeholders. In doing the above, the SPV will own the Intellectual Property (IP) of all related assets and processes on behalf of the Government of India.

iGOT contains six hubs, with each hub representing a different aspect of the capacity building apparatus:

- a. **The Competency Hub:** Here, the officer will learn which competencies are required for her position, and her current level of those competencies.
- b. **The Learning Hub:** Here, the officer will be able to access a marketplace of courses. In the Mission Karmayogi parlance, we call these training courses 'Competency Building Products' (CBPs), because these courses are laser-focused on building the officers' competencies. The officer will be able to consume the CBPs required for their role, as well as CBPs to build competencies they may not need today, but which they wish to acquire in the future. In this way, we are transitioning the public HR system to being more role-based. Most of these CBPs will be produced by Indian organizations and contextualized for the unique situations faced by Indian civil servants.
- c. **The Career Hub:** Here, the officer will be able to view all the competencies required for other positions in the civil service. The officer may aspire to be promoted to such positions in the future, and therefore, knowing which competencies are required will enable them to plan their career trajectory effectively.
- d. **The Discussion Hub:** Here, officers will be able to discuss various topics that may be relevant to their work, and in the process, signal their expertise to a wider world.
- e. **The Network Hub:** here the officers will be able to connect with other officers in the government, and to receive mentoring and guidance from more senior officers.
- f. **The Events Hub:** here, officers will be able to learn about and participate in various online and offline events where they can share ideas and interact with each other.

Therefore, iGOT will help officers identify gaps with respect to the competencies required for their roles through various forms of assessments; address these gaps using CBPs that are contextualized for India; and connect across departmental silos and seek and provide mentorship.

The iGOT platform is supported by a robust monitoring system that will assess officers' engagement with the platform, and measure whether their competencies are truly being built through the platform. In particular, officers' competencies will be assessed through a number of assessments on the platform: those that are part of the course itself; proctored assessments that are provided by independent assessment providers; and workplace competency assessments that are provided by the individuals with whom the officer works closely. All these assessments will help the officer understand where she stands vis-a-vis the role that she is expected to perform. It will also help her Ministry or Department understand her performance, and calibrate her professional trajectory accordingly.

But it is not just the officers whose platform engagement and performance will be assessed. CBPs will also be assessed for their impact on the officers' competency levels. Further, organizations providing these CBPs, such as universities or national training institutes, will be assessed for the impact of their courses on officers' competency levels and the quality of the content that they produce. There will also be an overall composite score for each Ministry that can be used to rank the Ministry based on its overall performance on the Mission Karmayogi program.

The iGOT Karmayogi platform will benefit stakeholders in a number of ways. Officials will be enabled to identify gaps in the competencies they are expected to have by taking assessments on the platform that evaluate the relevant skills, attitudes, and knowledge. Once they are aware of how much they need to learn to meet the requirements of their roles, they can address these gaps by taking courses that are designed keeping the unique developmental needs of the Indian civil service in mind. Providing a space for civil servants to learn independently and autonomously will motivate them to make learning a regular part of their professional lives and engage in lifelong learning. Ministries and Departments, in turn, will be able to communicate the expectations of each role to civil servants, and assign roles to those that are best suited for them. CBP providers, such as Central and State Training Institutes, will be able to provide courses of a higher standard by understanding the demand for courses and the impact they have on learners, as well as the changing needs of the Ministries and Departments of the Government of India. And more importantly iGOT will help provide anytime, anywhere, any gadget learning to the nearly 3.1 million civil servants (belonging to Groups A, B and C) of the Government of India and another 20 millions employees of all the State Governments and CPSUs.

The Capacity Building Commission of India (CBC), considered the heart and soul of Mission Karmayogi plays a key role by focusing on both the demand and the supply side of training. It is addressing the supply side by ensuring oversight and quality demands on the CBPs that will be available on iGOT, and by developing an accreditation framework for Central Training Institutes. This work will harmonize the standards for capacity building and facilitate knowledge sharing between institutes. The CBC is assessing the baseline of existing capacities of CTIs and providing a standard for them to elevate the quality of training they provide. The standard will further be used to harmonize civil service training delivery in the country by defining processes and procedures of a civil services training institute. On the demand side, the CBC is helping Ministries prepare Annual Capacity Building Plans (ACBPs). These ACBPs detail the steps that the Ministry intends to take to build the capacity (both training and non-training) of their officials, identify factors that impact the motivation and engagement of officials, and provide an environment that enables them to deliver services effectively. The CBC will also undertake HR audits to understand the people, process and other system challenges and explore non-training interventions to mitigate them.

Once all these steps have been taken, India's capacity building system will look very different, and we would have effectively addressed many criticisms of the current model. One, training and capacity building programs would be better targeted, because they would focus on the competencies that the officer needs but lacks for their current role.

Two, more cross-learning and cross-utilization of resources would be enabled across different cadres of the civil service, and across different training institutes. For example, if two different cadres require the same functional competency, only one of the corresponding civil service training institutes needs to develop the CBP for that competency. This would save substantial resources. More importantly, there will be greater consistency in training priorities and pedagogy, and these efforts would contribute to breaking down the departmental silos that sometimes can stifle government performance. It will also be a precursor step towards enabling a 'whole of government' approach towards delivery of goods and services to citizens.

Three, officers would benefit from greater flexibility in the training programs. Today, most training programs take place on particular days at particular locations, which makes it challenging for some civil servants to benefit from these programs. A technical architecture like iGOT can enable anytime, anywhere, any gadget learning, which is more consistent with the needs of several civil servant roles, such as frontline workers and police officers.

Four, the whole process would refresh the technological and pedagogical methods used by the civil service training system. Online training would be much more efficient: direct to learner, rather than through a cascading training-of-trainer system which can lead to transmission loss. In terms of andragogy, Mission Karmayogi's

emphasis on learning communities, on-the-job learning, mentoring, adult learning principles, and post-training support and mentoring will bring India's capacity building system into the 21st century. All capacity building programs will also be driven by the 70-20-10 framework where 70% will involve experiential on-the-job learning, 20% will be peer-driven and mentor-based relational learning, and 10% will be content-based informational learning.

Five, the program would create much stronger incentives for learning and applying knowledge than what exists today. iGOT's technological architecture will make it easy to measure, document, and reward progress in a systematic and consistent way across Ministries and Departments. Officers will now be able to more credibly signal their expertise to their employer, and therefore the civil service may find it easier to place the right civil servant in the right role driven by objectively verifiable criteria.

Finally, capacity building would become a lot more equitable and democratized. While Group A officers still manage to receive a host of training opportunities today, the training of Group B and C officers is sporadic and not provided at the right junctures in their careers. Offline methods also make it challenging to train frontline workers, who interact directly with citizens. iGOT solves for all these problems, and will be a step change in how the Indian state is able to work. The inputs from the HR audit and real-time information collected and collated from the CBUs will help the CBC frame robust and actionable HR policy inputs for the consideration of DOPT.

Together, the interventions set forth as part of Mission Karmayogi will actualize the vision of the National Training Policy (2012). With the CBC revising to make it updated, contextually relevant and culturally appropriate, any gaps will soon be addressed and a future-ready policy will also be in place. And this will further enable training programs to align comprehensively with the requirements of the roles that civil servants are assigned, empowering them to perform at their best. It will facilitate the breaking down of silos between different training programs and institutions, supporting a pedagogy that is consistent, coherent, and accessible to all. Further, civil servants from all departments, positions, and services would have access to the same training, and will be able to take charge of their own growth as public servants. Training programs will constantly evolve to match the needs of civil servants and the ever-changing world. Public HR management systems will be able to take advantage of competency-focused training infrastructure, assigning officials to roles that they are both interested in and skilled at, allowing Ministries and Departments to perform better at achieving their goals.

Emerging as a global exemplar

A post-Covid BANI (Brittle, Anxious, Non-linear and Incomprehensible) world is redefining the very understanding of the future of WORK. The understanding of what is a public good is also constantly evolving along with the increasing demand and aspirations of citizens. India is now moving towards a 'Less Government, More Governance' approach that is driven by citizen engagement and partnership. All this requires a paradigmatic shift in the capacities, mindset and actions of the civil servant. Technology is no longer a fashion statement and is redefining how goods and services can be rendered. From Aadhar to DBT and Digilocker, from CPGRAMS to MyGov, from faceless transactions to drone deliveries, from online learning to a Digital University, India is rapidly integrating technology in both governance and in delivering goods and services. The structure and setup of the WORKPLACE is rapidly altering and 'work from anywhere to deliver good governance' to all citizens will soon become the new norm. All this requires a WORKER (civil servant) who is not just committed but also has the competence to deliver on this evolving mandate. While the world struggles to understand these changes, India has taken on the pioneering role of not just ushering in inclusive citizen-centric development, but also to democratize the knowledge that can drive it. And in the civilizational spirit of Vasudaiva Kutumbakam, India is preparing itself to share the knowledge, experience and expertise that it is now developing as an exemplar in public administration with the rest of the world.



R. Balasubramaniam

MEMBER – HR,
Capacity Building Commission
Visiting Professor, Cornell
University and IIT Delhi
Founder, Swami Vivekananda
Youth Movement (SVYM) and
Grassroots Research and Advocacy
Movement (GRAAM)

Having embarked on his journey in the development sector by living and working for several years among remote forest based tribal communities in the southern Indian district of Mysuru, Dr. R Balasubramaniam (Balu) is a widely respected development activist, leadership trainer, thinker and writer. After his MBBS, he earned his MPhil in Hospital Administration & Health Systems Management from BITS, Pilani. He has a Master's in Public Administration from the Harvard Kennedy School, Harvard University. His living habits were greatly influenced by the teachings of Swami Vivekananda and at the age of 19, he founded the Swami Vivekananda Youth Movement based on the principles of Ahimsa, Satya, Seva and Tyaga. He has spent more than three decades of his life in the service of the rural and tribal poor in the forests of India. He is also the Founder of Grassroots Research and Advocacy Movement, a public policy thinktank in India.

Dr Balu embodies a rare blend of grassroots and macro perspectives and policy through his multi-faceted experience of more than three decades. He is a Tata Scholar, a Mason Fellow of the Harvard Kennedy School and a Fellow at the Hauser Center for Civil Society, Harvard University. He was the Head and Visiting Professor of the Vivekananda Chair, University of Mysore twice.

He is currently a visiting professor at Cornell University, USA and at IIT-Delhi, India where he teaches courses on Leadership and Human Development. He coaches and mentors senior leaders in the non-profit, corporate, government and educational sectors globally, apart from running leadership workshops for people from these sectors. He is the Chairman of the Social Stock Exchange Advisory Committee set up by SEBI. He is currently the Member-HR in the Capacity Building Commission of the Government of India.

He has authored seven books, both in Kannada and English. More about him, his work and books are at www.drrbalu.com



**CAPACITY
BUILDING
COMMISSION**

Capacity Building Commission

**20th, 21st & 22nd Floor,
Jawahar Vyapar Bhavan,
Tolstoy Road, New Delhi - 110001**

