

Redefining Governance:

INDIA'S PATH TO ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS



The administration ensures citizen-centric service delivery, and is vital for India's socio-economic progress. Post-independence, administrative reforms were aimed at transforming the colonial-era machinery into one supporting democracy and development to address new and emerging challenges. As India celebrates its 75th year of independence, the Prime Minister advocates Next Generation Reforms to bridge the government-citizen gap, promoting more effective governance.

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I. What do we mean by Administrative Reforms?

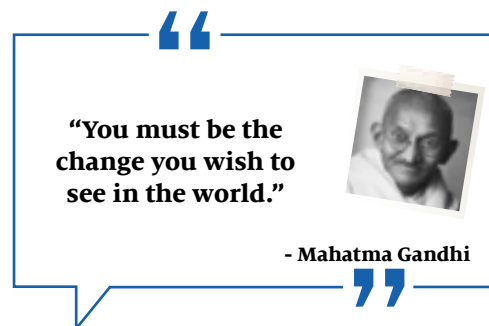
Administrative reforms strive to establish and put into practice the necessary **adjustments for a government's administrative entities to effectively implement public policies.**

The shift from colonial dominance and British laws to democracy marked India's initial reform. Consequently, administrative overhauls became imperative, leading to establishment of commissions/committees like Gorwala Committee, Administrative Reforms Commission, Hota Committee etc.

I.1. What are the different forms of Administrative Reforms?

Administrative reforms can take various forms depending on context, goals, and challenges faced by a government. Some common forms of administrative reforms include:

- **Structural Reform:** It focuses on **division of work, delegation and decentralisation, creation of autonomous agencies, and setting up of coordinating mechanisms** to harmonise the actions of interdependent units.
- **Procedural Reform:** Involves **changes in financial rules, alteration of work procedures** (e.g. changes in filing methods, forms etc.), and other general attempts to avoid red tape.
 - ▷ **The Staff Inspection Unit, under the Ministry of Finance**, set up with the objective of securing the economy in the staffing of Government organizations consistent with administrative efficiency and evolving performance standards, is included under this category.
- **Institutional reforms:** Involves **strengthening institutional capacities**, through devolution, decentralisation and democratisation, for effective functioning of grassroot level democracy.
 - ▷ **Establishing new regulatory and oversight agencies**, to evaluate performance and enhance efficiency of government agencies also falls under this category.
- **Behavioural Reform:** Bringing behavioural changes to **improve interpersonal and intergroup relationships** within the bureaucracy.
- **Citizen-centricity Reform:** Enhancing the **accessibility, quality, and responsiveness of public services** to meet the aims and aspirations of citizens, and addressing people's grievances effectively.
- **Legal Reform:** It involves the process of **developing and enacting legislation through consultations and deliberations** in various forums like committees, commissions, press etc.
 - ▷ For instance, new laws on land reforms or local government can bring significant changes to administration, receiving wide publicity during drafting and debate.



2. What makes Administrative Reforms essential in India?

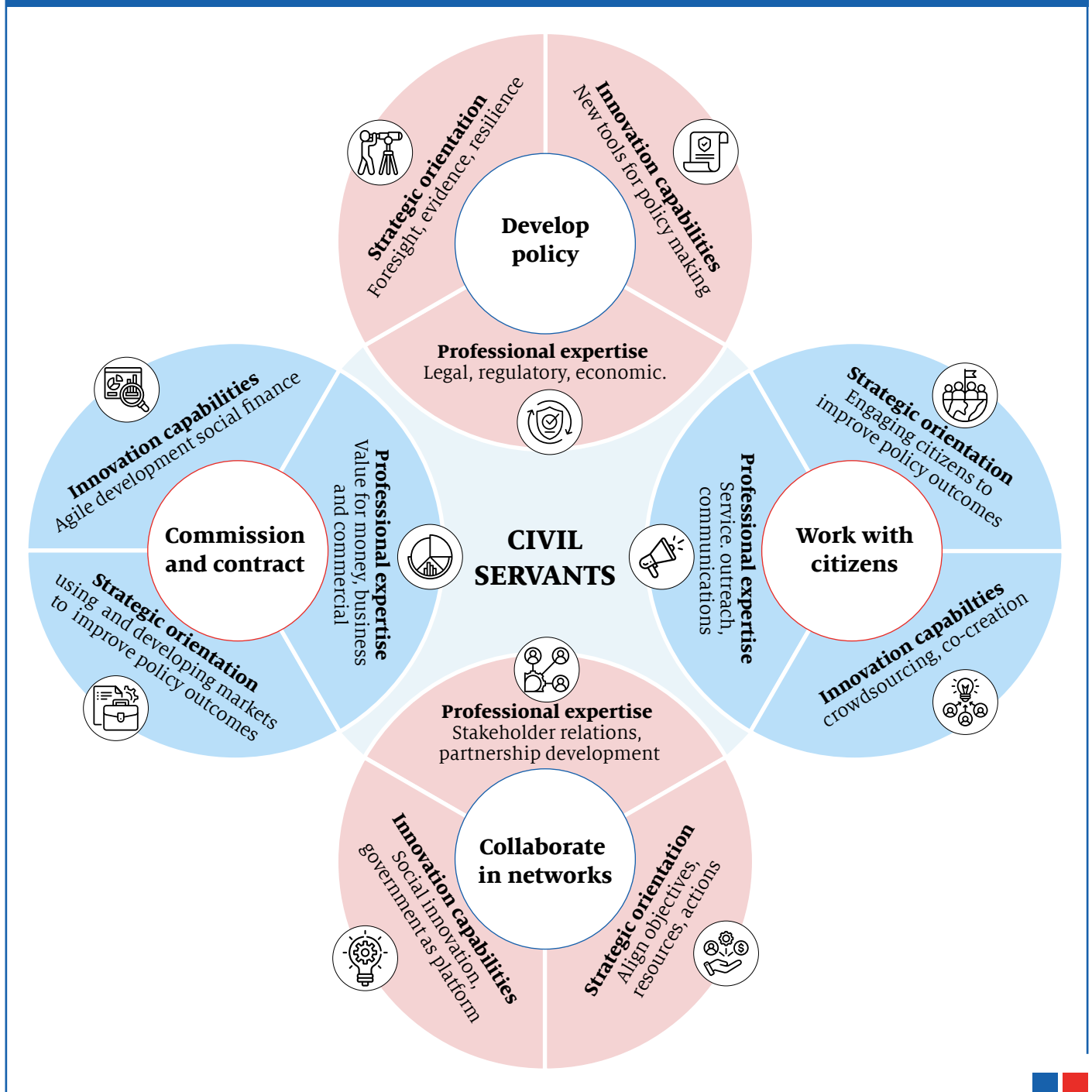
Administrations today are addressing problems of unprecedented complexity in societies that are more pluralistic and demanding than ever. At the same time, the systems and tools of governance are increasingly digital, open and networked. Thus, administrations need the right skills to keep pace with the changing environment.

- **Adaptability:** Administrative reforms are needed to adapt to changing circumstances, address new and emerging challenges, such as the ones associated with rapid technological progress, and achieve societal expectations.
 - ▷ Reforms can also **aid the integration of new ideas, policies, institutional arrangements, management tools and technologies** in governance.
- **Emphasis on procedure than outcomes:** Over time, administrative processes have become inefficient due to outdated systems, bureaucratic red tape, or inefficiencies in resource allocation.
- **Excessive centralization:** Due to the top-down nature of governance in India, reforms aimed at decentralisation are necessary to enhance **grass-root democracy and citizen participation** in the governance system.
- **Poor public perception:** The **credibility and effectiveness of civil services has eroded** in public due to growing perception of nexus between politicians, civil servants and criminals.
 - ▷ Further, **lack of transparency and accessibility** has deteriorated the public image of civil servants.

- **Sub-optimal Performance management systems:** The absence of a well-defined structure for rewards and punishments and the confusion regarding the desirable service norms for civil service have led to **low morale and the pursuit of career advancement** at the expense of ethical values.
- **Limited focus on Citizen-centric Governance:** Due to issues like complex processes, ineffective grievance redressal systems, centralized structure, the administrative system in India has become non-responsive.

- Further, citizen participation in administrative decision is also inadequate.
- **Need of Capacity Building:** Civil Service Reforms, such as skill enhancement and updating processes related to recruitment, appraisal, promotions, etc., based on evolving needs are necessary to strengthen administrative capacity and raise the quality of services to the citizens.

Figure 2.1: Competencies and Skills Required in Civil Servants



3. What are the major administrative reforms that have been taken in India?

Administrative reforms are a continuous process. Government of India follows the principle of “**Minimum Government - Maximum Governance**” to enhance efficiency, transparency, corruption-free governance, accountability, and minimizing discretionary powers, and reducing scope for discretion. Some of major steps are as follows:

Table 3.1: Administrative reforms in India

<p>Structural/ Institutional reforms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG): Lying under Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions (MoPPG&P), it is the nodal agency of Government of India for administrative reforms and redressal of public grievances. ➤ Administrative Reform Commissions (ARCs): First established in 1996 and second in 2005, to examine the public administration and make recommendation for reform and reorganisation. ➤ Central Vigilance Commission (CVC): Statutory body, established in 1964, responsible for promoting integrity, transparency, and accountability in the country's public administration.
<p>Reforms for improving administrative Human Resource</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ National Programme for Civil Services Capacity Building (NPCSCB)—Mission Karmayogi: Launched in 2020, to make Indian civil servants more creative, constructive, innovative, proactive, professional, progressive, energetic, and technology-enabled in the future. ➤ Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024: Aims to prevent the use of unfair means in public examinations and bring greater transparency, fairness and credibility to public examinations like UPSC, SSC, etc. ➤ Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Public Administration: To acknowledge, recognize and reward the exemplary work done by Civil Servants.
<p>Citizen centric and responsive initiatives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Centralized Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System' (CPGRAMS): Online platform available to the citizens 24x7 to lodge their grievances to the public authorities on any subject related to service delivery. ➤ Citizen Charters: Many Government authorities publish this document to represent a systematic effort to focus on commitment of Organisation towards its Citizens. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ It contains commitments in respect of Standard of Services, Information, Choice and Consultation, Non-discrimination and Accessibility, Grievance Redress, Courtesy and Value for Money. ➤ Sevottam Model: A Service Delivery Excellence Model which provides an assessment improvement framework to bring about excellence in public service delivery. ➤ Right to Information (RTI) Act 2005: Aimed at creating informed citizens who can ensure transparent and accountable administration. ➤ Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs): Ensure high level of citizens' participation and accountability through social audit and other institutions like Gram Sabha.
<p>Tech enabled Governance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ e-Kranti: National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) 2.0: It utilizes emerging technologies such as Cloud and Mobile Platform to make government services available to the general public, ensuring efficiency, transparency, and reliability of such services at reasonable prices. ➤ e-Office: To achieve a simplified, responsive, effective and transparent working of all government offices. ➤ e-SamikSha: A real-time online system for monitoring and following up on the decisions taken by Government at Apex level.

Performance assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ National e-Governance Service Delivery Assessment (NeSDA): Developed by DARPG to measure the depth and effectiveness of existing States, UTs and Central Ministries e-Governance service delivery mechanisms from the citizen's perspective. ➤ Good Governance Index (GGI): A comprehensive and implementable framework to assess the quality of Governance across States and UTs which enables ranking of States/Districts.
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Acceptance of several Recommendations of Second Administrative Reform Commission (ARC)

Ethics in Governance	➤ Provision of Social Audit made as part of operational guidelines of all developmental schemes and citizen centric programmes. E.g., MGNREGA etc.
Local Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Use of Information and Communication Technology by local governments. ➤ Example, Antyodaya SARAL programme by Haryana to digitise all services and schemes offered by state to its citizens.
Promoting e-Governance : The Smart Way Forward	➤ Initiatives like Unique National Identity Number/Card (Aadhaar) for all residents of India, Mission Mode Project on Computerisation of Land Records (e.g.,- Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme (DILRMP)) etc.

4. What are the roadblocks in implementing Administrative Reforms in India?

The implementation of multiple reforms proposed by various committees and commissions has been impeded by a myriad of issues-

- **Concentration of power:** India's administrative structure is **hierarchical and centralized with decision-making concentrated at top levels**. Reforms challenging their practices and power structure face resistance due to reluctance in devolution of power.
- **Complex process:** Systemic rigidities in policy and management structures within which the civil service functions make the reform process **time-consuming and complex**.
 - The issue is compounded by other challenges such as lack of political will, lack of consensus among the members, etc.
- **Dynamic Transitions:** The country is undergoing rapid and fundamental changes in terms of economic growth, urbanization, environmental degradation, technological change and increased local awareness and identity. The **response time to adapt to these changes is much shorter** than it used to be.
- **Bureaucratic inertia:** Administrative complacency, rising indiscipline, bureaucratic elitism and rampant corruption often lead to the **maintenance of the status quo**.
- **Capacity Building:** Insufficient infrastructure, investment in training and development programs, **vacant seats** in government offices, **lack of necessary skills** and **expertise** impede the implementation of new administrative practices effectively.
 - For example, as of December 2022, CBI is facing a shortage of 23% of manpower, as of September, 2021, over 4.5 crore cases were pending across all courts in India.
- **Poor coordination:** The hierarchical system, **poor coordination among government departments, overlapping responsibilities** and multiple layers of decision-making result in procedural delays in the implementation of reforms.
- **Limited citizen participation:** The current administrative framework lacks close interaction with citizens, making the reform process less attuned to their needs.

Box 4.1: Good Governance and Citizen Centric Administration in India

- Good governance aims at **providing public services effectively, efficiently and equitably** to all citizens irrespective of class, caste and gender.
- **The 4 pillars of good governance are-**
 - **Ethos** (of service to the citizen),
 - **Ethics** (honesty, integrity and transparency),
 - **Equity** (treating all citizens alike with empathy for weaker sections), and
 - **Efficiency** (speedy and effective delivery of service without harassment and using ICT increasingly).
- Citizens are thus at the core of good governance. Therefore, good governance and citizen centric administration are inextricably linked. However, there are some barriers to **Citizen Centric Administration in India:**
 - **Attitudinal Problems** of civil servants.
 - **Misuse of authority due to lack of accountability** within system.
 - **Rigid adherence to rules and procedures** can lead to **delay and corruption.**
 - **Low levels of awareness** of the rights and duties of citizens.
 - **Ineffective implementation** of laws and rules.
- In this regard, the Second Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) recommended a model to ensure citizen-centricity in public administration (see Figure 4.1).

“**in the happiness of his subjects lies his happiness, in their welfare his welfare, whatever pleases himself, he does not consider as good, but whatever pleases his subjects he considers as good**”.

- Kautilya


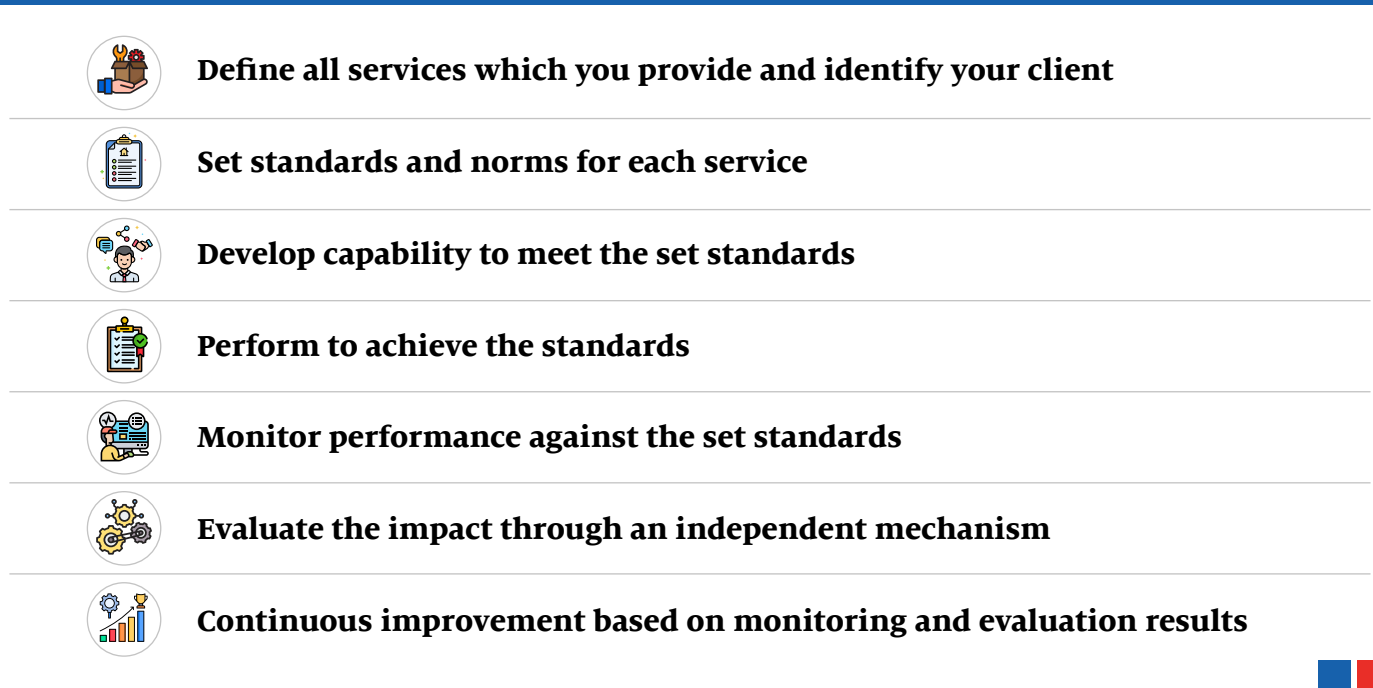


Figure 4.1 : ARC Seven Step Model for Citizen Centricity

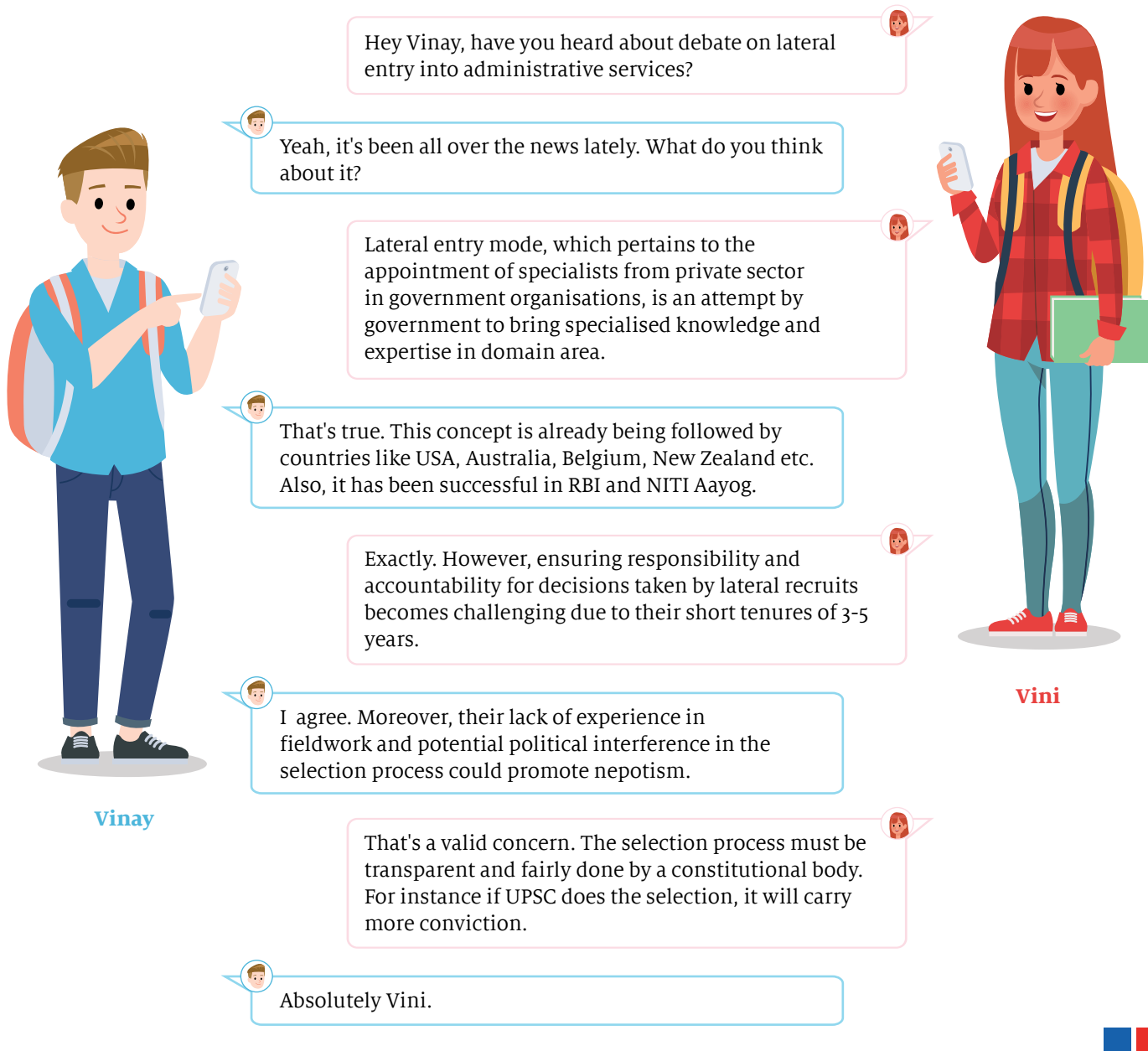


5. How can we overcome the obstacles in implementing administrative reforms?

Addressing challenges in effectively managing public affairs through administrative reform requires a comprehensive approach that considers diverse contributing factors.

- **Executive Synergy:** The relationship between **political executive and civil services** needs to be transformed on the basis of mutual understanding, respect and recognition of each other's distinct roles and responsibilities.
- **Coordination with civil society:** **Civil servants should view** civil society organisations (CSOs) **and private sector as partners** in the developmental process of the country's governance.
- **Citizen-centricity:** There is a need to shift from the pre-eminence of governance to effective governance with a focus on **decentralization and citizen-centricity**.
 - ▷ This requires **the active engagement of stakeholders** to understand their needs and concerns and their integration into the reform process to provide efficient and accessible services to all.
- **Revamping education:** There is a need to **introduce a formal degree course in public policy and management in higher education** curriculum.
 - ▷ The syllabi in public policy and management must include an understanding and insight into our Constitution and laws, political system, social and economic concerns, public services, human resource management and **core principles of good governance**.
- **Specialized services:** As per 2nd ARC, every officer should **gain domain expertise in one area of administration** after the initial years of field postings, say 12 years. Later, they should serve for the remainder of their service only in those chosen sectors.
 - ▷ A **transparent, institutionalized procedure for lateral entry** at both the central and state levels was also recommended by the second ARC.
- **Performance Review:** A provision should be made in Civil services law outlining a mechanism to compulsorily retire officers after 15 years, 20 years, 25 years, and 30 years of service after a thorough review of their performance and potential.
- **Dedicated authority for personnel management:** 2nd ARC suggested the establishment of a '**Central Civil Services Authority**' entrusted with the task of identifying the posts at the higher management level, fixing tenure for all civil service positions among other things.
 - ▷ A statutory body **Civil Services Board (CSB) can also be created** to look into issues such as transfers and promotion of Civil servants. This will help in reducing political pressures on the careers of civil servants.
- **Adoption of Technology:** Leveraging technology such as blockchain, artificial intelligence, 5G etc. can increase **transparency, reduce corruption, and improve efficiency**.
- **Learning from past experiences and global practices:** It is crucial to **identify successes, shortcomings, and lessons learned from previous reform** initiatives, as well as global best practices to inform future reform efforts effectively.
- **Recommendations from other Committees on Civil Service Reform:**
 - ▷ **PC Hota Committee:**
 - » Each Department/Ministry must **identify points of citizen interface** and strengthen the existing grievance redressal mechanism.
 - » Officers of higher Civil Service must supervise work of junior functionaries by **regular visits and inspections**.
 - » New simplified to replace **antiquated rules and procedures in Government**.
 - ▷ **Baswan Committee:**
 - » To fulfil the requirement of IAS officers for next 10 years, the **intake through civil service examination will need to be limited to a certain number to maintain quality** and to balance the demand of different cadres.
 - » **Process of settlement of disputes** by various state governments in relation to promoted officers should be done in a speedy manner, in order to minimise the gap.

Box 5.1: In Conversation: Lateral Entry: The solution to Transforming India's Bureaucracy?



Hey Vinay, have you heard about debate on lateral entry into administrative services?

Yeah, it's been all over the news lately. What do you think about it?

Lateral entry mode, which pertains to the appointment of specialists from private sector in government organisations, is an attempt by government to bring specialised knowledge and expertise in domain area.

That's true. This concept is already being followed by countries like USA, Australia, Belgium, New Zealand etc. Also, it has been successful in RBI and NITI Aayog.

Exactly. However, ensuring responsibility and accountability for decisions taken by lateral recruits becomes challenging due to their short tenures of 3-5 years.

I agree. Moreover, their lack of experience in fieldwork and potential political interference in the selection process could promote nepotism.

That's a valid concern. The selection process must be transparent and fairly done by a constitutional body. For instance if UPSC does the selection, it will carry more conviction.

Absolutely Vini.

Vinay

Vini

Box 5.2: Transformative Technologies: Revolutionizing Administrative Reforms

Today the utilization of technology is rapidly increasing across various spheres of administration. For instance-

- ▶ **Geographical Information Systems (GIS)** to enhance the process flow, policies, and engagement of the government with citizens through applications in urban and regional planning, property tax assessments, etc.
 - ▶ E.g., GIS-based planning under Mahatma Gandhi NREGS.
- ▶ **Blockchain technology** for reducing corruption in land management systems.
 - ▶ E.g., Blockchain is being used by Govt. of Assam to bring radical transformation in Land Records Management.
- ▶ **Artificial intelligence** to enable automation in government services such as grievance redressal.
 - ▶ E.g., AI Chatbot **Kisan e-Mitra** provides farmers prompt, clear, and accurate responses to their queries PM-KISAN scheme.

Box 5.3.: Global Best Practices in Public Administration and Public Service Delivery

- **Integrity assessment of Public Organizations, Korea:** Integrity assessment anchored in Anti-Corruption and Civil Rights Commission (ACRC) to **encourage public institutions to engage in voluntary efforts to prevent corruption** by regularly assessing and **disclosing their Integrity levels**.
- **Public Service Reform with Specific Emphasis on Performance Management System (PMS), Ghana:** PMS was brought to address deteriorating condition of appraisal system of public servants. It enables a performance driven culture with emphasis on continuous feedback and employee development.

Conclusion

Administrative reforms in India have come a long way, and several significant achievements have been made in enhancing governance and service delivery. However, there is still much to be done particularly in addressing the persistent challenges faced in the administrative system. Adopting best practices and applying the lessons learned from past reform efforts can guide future initiatives towards more productive outcomes. With emerging technologies and a growing emphasis on transparency and citizen participation, there is ample opportunity to build upon past successes and enhance the effectiveness of the administrative system.



TOPIC AT A GLANCE

Administrative reforms strive to establish and put into practice the necessary **adjustments for a government's administrative entities to effectively implement public policies.**

Forms of Administrative Reforms

- ⊕ **Structural Reform:** Division of work, delegation and decentralisation, etc.
- ⊕ **Procedural Reform:** Changes in financial rules, alteration of work procedures etc.
- ⊕ **Institutional reforms:** Strengthening institutional capacities; Establishing new regulatory and oversight agencies etc.
- ⊕ **Behavioural Reform:** To improve interpersonal and intergroup relationships within bureaucracy.
- ⊕ **Citizen-centricity Reform:** For accessibility, quality, and responsiveness of public services.
- ⊕ **Legal Reform:** Developing and enacting legislation through consultations and deliberations.

Need of Administrative Reforms in India

- ⊕ **Adaptation to changing circumstances:** like rapid technological progress.
- ⊕ **Emphasis on procedure than outcomes:** Due to outdated systems, bureaucratic red tape etc.
- ⊕ **Excessive centralization of governance in India.**
- ⊕ **Poor public perception:** Of credibility and effectiveness of civil services.
- ⊕ **Sub-optimal Performance management system**
- ⊕ **Limited focus on Citizen-centric Governance:** Complex processes, ineffective grievance redressal systems, etc.
- ⊕ **Need of Capacity Building** and reforms in recruitment, appraisal, promotions, etc.

Major administrative reforms in India

- ⊕ **Structural/Institutional reforms:** Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG); Administrative Reform Commissions (ARCs); Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) etc.
- ⊕ **Reforms for improving administrative Human Resource:** Mission Karmayogi; Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024; etc.
- ⊕ **Citizen centric and responsive initiatives:** CPGRAMS; Citizen Charters; Sevottam Model; Right to Information (RTI) Act 2005 etc.
- ⊕ **Tech enabled Governance:** e-Kranti: National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) 2.0; e-Office; e-SamikSha etc.
- ⊕ **Performance assessment:** National e-Governance Service Delivery Assessment; Good Governance Index (GGI) etc.

Roadblocks in Implementing Administrative Reforms in India

- ⊕ **Concentration of power:** Hierarchical and centralized administrative structure.
- ⊕ **Complex process:** Systemic rigidities in policy and management structures
- ⊕ **Rapid and fundamental changes:** In terms of economic growth, urbanization, environmental degradation, technological change etc.
- ⊕ **Bureaucratic inertia:** Due to complacency, corruption etc.
- ⊕ **Capacity Building:** Insufficient infrastructure, low investment in training and development programs, lack of necessary skills and expertise etc.
- ⊕ **Poor coordination** among government departments, overlapping responsibilities.
- ⊕ **Limited citizen participation**

Way forward

- ⊕ **Executive Synergy:** Between political executive and civil services.
- ⊕ **Citizen-centricity:** Citizen-centricity through active engagement of **stakeholders.**
- ⊕ **Revamping education** in public policy and management.
- ⊕ **Specialized services:** Officer with domain expertise in one area of administration.
- ⊕ **Performance Review**
- ⊕ **Dedicated authority for personnel management:** 'Central Civil Services Authority' proposed by 2nd ARC.
- ⊕ **Leveraging technologies:** Such as blockchain, artificial intelligence etc.
- ⊕ **Implementing Recommendations** from PC Hota Committee and Baswan Committee

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