



Role Of Bureaucratic Reforms In Enhancing Administrative Efficiency In Indian States

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ABSTRACT

The role of bureaucratic reforms in enhancing administrative efficiency in Indian states is one of the critical areas to be studied, especially considering the changing governance landscape in India. The paper aims at exploring how different reforms have been implemented to address the inefficiencies within the system that has been characterized traditionally by red tape, slow decision-making, and failure to respond to citizen needs. The transition from colonial administrative practices to a more democratic governance model required considerable reforms to improve service delivery and accountability. The research uses case studies and reform initiatives and shed light on the impact of these reforms on administrative efficiency and public satisfaction. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of how bureaucratic reforms can serve as a catalyst for effective governance in India.

KEYWORDS: Bureaucracy, Reforms, Efficacy, Technology, Challenges.

INTRODUCTION

Bureaucratic reforms in India have, thus, been an essential input to enhance administrative efficiency across states. These reforms have been made over several decades with the objective of making the process more streamlined, providing better services, and achieving transparency in government operations. The major initiative was the Administrative Reforms Commission, established in 1966, which set out foundational recommendations for improving the administrative structure in India. Its reports highlighted a more responsive bureaucracy and led to the creation of various practices on the administrative front, which would focus on efficiency and accountability. The Centralized Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS) were started in 2007, which aimed to make grievance Redressal streamlined by allowing the citizen to lodge complaints electronically. This system cut down response times of grievances for the public to very a small extent by 2019. With introduction of e-Governance projects, citizens' relationship with the state has also changed. Implementations of e-District and e-Sewa have taken place in Andhra Pradesh and Haryana, allowing online delivery services and saving time lost from bureaucratic processes.

The Business Reform Action Plan (BRAP), initiated in 2015, aimed to improve the ease of doing business across states by ranking them based on their reform implementation.

States like Andhra Pradesh and Telangana have consistently topped these rankings, showcasing their commitment to creating a business-friendly environment. The Right to Information Act (RTI) of 2005 was another landmark legislation that empowered citizens by ensuring transparency in government operations. The RTI Act has brought more accountability in the bureaucrats and has been very helpful in exposing corruption and inefficiency. The Digital India Initiative was initiated in 2015, and the aim was to make India a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. This initiative led to the digitization of several government services, which became easily accessible to citizens. In 2019, the Government of India has launched the State Good Governance Index to rate the performance of states based on various governance parameters. This index promotes the adoption of best practices and improved administrative frameworks among states. Reforms in decentralizing decision-making processes have been implemented in several states to allow the local authorities more freedom. These changes have enhanced responsiveness to issues at the local level as well as service delivery. Finally, the initiation of performance appraisal systems among civil servants has helped to foster accountability and meritocracy within the bureaucracy. The shift promotes better performance and increased overall administrative efficiency. All these changes contribute to a more effective administrative structure in Indian states, promoting greater transparency, accountability, and better service delivery to citizens. The continuous development of these programs indicates India's efforts to improve governance through well-planned reforms till 2019.

OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of the paper are to analyze the historical context and evolution of bureaucratic reforms in India, and highlight the important milestones which have shaped modern administrative practices. It examines the efficacy of reform efforts made by Indian states to make bureaucracy more transparent and accountable. Further, the paper evaluates the effectiveness of technology-based reforms in streamlining bureaucratic efficiency and citizen engagement through e-governance and digital service delivery. It further identifies challenges for state governments in implementing such reforms and provides strategies to overcome the barriers so that the gains in administrative efficiency are sustainable.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The problem that the paper seeks to address is that of persistent inefficiencies in bureaucratic systems across Indian states, which do not promote transparency, accountability, and effective service delivery. The challenges of resistance to change, lack of infrastructure, and uneven implementation are found to be persistent, despite several reform initiatives and adoption of technology-driven solutions such as e-governance. These issues do not only affect administrative efficiency but also limit citizen engagement and trust in governance. The very requirements of having an in-depth understanding of these barriers and the development of sustainable strategies to overcome them are the core of the study.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

An effective analysis of Indian bureaucratic reforms would result from a combination of theoretical perspectives. Using Max Weber's Theory of Bureaucracy (1947) can offer a simplistic understanding of the inherited hierarchical and rule-bound structures based on

colonial administration practice, which have shaped the historic trends of reforms in the country. North's Institutional Theory (1990) highlights how formal and informal governance structures shape and constrain the adoption of reforms, offering insights into systemic inertia and resistance to change. The New Public Management (NPM) Approach (Hood, 1991) is particularly useful for evaluating the effectiveness of reform initiatives aimed at improving transparency and accountability by emphasizing efficiency, performance metrics, and citizen-centric service delivery. The impact of technology-driven reforms is well-explained by the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989), which focuses on how e-governance tools are adopted by officials and citizens, addressing barriers like usability and digital literacy. The Adaptive Capacity Framework (Walker et al., 2004) assesses the resilience and flexibility of bureaucratic systems in overcoming challenges such as resistance to change, inadequate digital infrastructure, and uneven implementation of reforms across states. These theories together provide an overall framework for analyzing the historical, institutional, and technological dimensions of bureaucratic reforms, thus also indicating strategies to overcome barriers and reach sustained administrative efficiency.

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

The research about bureaucratic reforms and their functions in improving the efficiency of administrative activity of the Indian states is highly significant, as it has implications in governance, development, and citizen welfare. Bureaucracy is the core function of the government, which in fact is directly associated with policy implementation, service delivery, and trust of citizens. However, inefficiencies such as over-red-tape, corruption, and lack of accountability have plagued the Indian bureaucracy for decades. Reforming this structure is important in order that government institutions will be able to respond to evolving socio-economic challenges and meet the aspirations of a diverse population. This study is of particular relevance in the context of India's rapid economic growth and technological changes, where digital tools like e-governance have emerged as key enablers of transparency and efficiency. The study identifies best practices and gaps in the evaluation of the effectiveness of these reforms to provide insights for policymakers to improve service delivery, enhance accountability, and foster citizen engagement. It also addresses critical challenges such as resistance to change, institutional inertia, and uneven implementation across states, proposing strategies for overcoming them. The importance of understanding the role of bureaucratic reforms in administrative efficiency cannot be overstated for promoting equitable development, strengthening governance, and achieving sustainable progress in India's states, particularly in an era of increasing demand for efficient public administration.

METHDOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive method with a qualitative approach to analyze the challenges and barriers of state governments in implementing bureaucratic reforms and proposing strategies for achieving sustainable administrative efficiency. The research mainly focuses on understanding the complexities of bureaucratic reforms through an in-depth exploration of existing literature, case studies, and expert opinions. Extensive reviews of secondary sources, such as government reports, academic journals, policy documents, and books, are conducted to gain insight into the historical context, reform initiatives, and their impacts. Data is collected from a range of secondary materials, including research papers,

official records, and statistical data, to evaluate the effectiveness of reforms and identify challenges in various states. The qualitative approach allows the study of systemic and institutional barriers in states in detail and also provides a platform to assess outcomes of technological interventions and reforms.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Historical Context and Evolution of Bureaucratic Reforms in India

Historical milestones have characterized the evolution of bureaucratic reforms in India, reflecting a changing administrative landscape that demands efficiency, transparency, and accountability. Post-independence, the newly independent nation of India took on the legacies of the previous colonial administration mainly interested in law enforcement and revenue collection. These early years witnessed a massive expansion in the civil service as the government took on various socio-economic responsibilities. The Indian Administrative Service (IAS) was established in 1951. Strength has increased from 957 at inception to nearly 5,000 by 2000, indicating growing needs for governance complexity. In the 1990s, concerns regarding inefficiency and corruption have forced a critical re-evaluation of administrative practices. Comprehensive reforms were initiated to restructure the civil service. This included the creation of the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) and the establishment of Administrative Reform Commissions (ARCs) in 1996 and 2005, which were to suggest measures for improving governance. The most important reforms were aimed at reducing the size of bureaucracy increasing productivity through meritocratic processes and better human resource management. Minimum Government-Maximum Governance has become an emergent issue, emphasizing the principle of efficiency in and responsiveness to citizens. The RTI Act, 2005 was an important reform towards more openness and reduction of corruption in governmental activity. E-Governance has also integrated technologies into governance with the hope of improving the processes for more efficient delivery of services. However, all these are yet to resolve the issues fully. Critics believe that many bureaucratic practices still have a colonial mentality, which prevents a fundamental change. Lateral entry into the bureaucracy has been suggested as a way to bring in new perspectives and expertise. However, meaningful reform remains complicated by the entrenched socialist philosophies that have long influenced India's administrative culture. The history of bureaucratic reforms in India shows that it is an ongoing battle to reconcile tradition with modern governance needs. The evolution represents deeper socio-political changes and the need for an adaptive administrative structure that can address existing and changing situations with accountability and efficiency in its service delivery. Such reforms are fundamental for enabling socio-economic development and the general effectiveness of governance in India.

Effectiveness of Reform Initiatives in Enhancing Transparency and Accountability

The success of reforms in promoting transparency and accountability within the Indian bureaucracy does reveal a wide range of efforts in different states, but definitely in JK. One such piece of legislation is the Right to Information Act, enacted in 2005. This law lets citizens request information from public authorities and, thus, enhances transparency. It has been an enabler in keeping bureaucrats accountable and made citizens demand information regarding governance. In Madhya Pradesh, gram sabha reforms were introduced in 2010 to

strengthen the powers of the councils at the village level. This move was a stepping stone toward increasing grassroots level accountability by involving the concerned local communities in active processes of decision-making. Similarly, the Andhra Pradesh government initiated a Social Audit Program in 2008, aimed at audit of government schemes to reveal corruption and ineffectiveness. Reports showed more than 7,000 officials under administrative or criminal charges due to revelations from these social audits. Rajasthan has improved through its e-governance projects since 2004. These projects had been used to reduce the bureaucratic red tape and also to improve the service delivery in the region. The introduction of online service platforms has increased transparency and reduced chances of corruption. In Kerala, the People's Plan Campaign, initiated in 1996, promotes participatory governance through decentralized planning. Local self-governments are empowered to formulate development plans based on community needs, which enhances accountability through citizen involvement. In Delhi, the Mohalla Sabhas, since 2015, have provided for local issues to be discussed and public officials called out to their actions. It has made civic engagement a bit greater and transparency within governance more considerate. In Jharkhand, the RTI Act was enacted back in 2005; this acted as a way for citizens to request massive amounts of information and therefore apply pressure on public officials to become accountable. The state has also trained officials on RTI compliance to enhance its effectiveness. Uttar Pradesh launched an Anti-Corruption Helpline in 2019, enabling citizens to report corruption directly to authorities. This initiative has led to increased responsiveness from bureaucrats and a reduction in corrupt practices. Haryana established a Grievance Redressal System in 2016 that allows citizens to lodge complaints against government officials online. This system aims at simplifying the grievance Redressal process and accountability within the bureaucracy. The Public Services Guarantee Act, in 2011, was enacted in Jammu and Kashmir, which mandates timely delivery of public services and has also provided a framework for accountability by allowing citizens to demand penalties against officials in the event of delays or failure to comply. These reflect a concerted effort in several Indian states toward enhancing transparency and accountability in the bureaucracy. Challenges notwithstanding, these reforms have immensely helped citizens and governance outcomes all over the country.

Figure 1.1 Government and state-specific reports on transparency and accountability reforms in Indian bureaucracy



Source: Government and state-specific reports on transparency and accountability reforms in Indian bureaucracy: 2018- 2019

Impact of Technology-Driven Reforms on Bureaucratic Efficiency and Citizen Engagement

Technology-driven reforms, especially e-governance and digital service delivery, have been transformative in the impact they have had on bureaucratic efficiency and citizen engagement in Indian states. Several states have adopted these reforms to improve public service delivery, increase transparency, and enhance citizen-government interactions over the last two decades. For instance, since 2005, Bihar has seen considerable changes under Chief Minister Nitish Kumar. The government has initiated a chain of ICT reforms that are meant to streamline operations across departments. Key areas here have included land registration and taxation, where the introduction of digital systems has helped significantly in reducing bureaucracy delays. Setting up a dedicated Department of Information Technology has been a structural milestone towards making the system more responsive. Comprehensive Treasury Management Information System implementation highly reduced the budgetary planning cycle time. Bureaucracy efficiency improvement was clearly pronounced; Andhra Pradesh is again such a state, which by now has effectively used technology towards enhancement in public service delivery through development of the Municipal Development scheme. Andhra Pradesh has improved access to over 350 government services through its MeeSeva initiative by replacing old paper-based systems with digital platforms. This has streamlined service delivery and reduced opportunities for corruption in critical areas such as taxation and construction permitting. Political support for these digital initiatives has been consistent, which is essential to ensure that the successive governments continue investing in and expanding these platforms. Maharashtra and Karnataka also have made a remarkable move in the direction of e-governance. The

digital India initiative by Maharashtra works on the betterment of digital infrastructure and promotes online services among all sectors such as health and education. On the other hand, Karnataka has launched numerous projects of e-governance to improve citizen services with the help of online portals that provide all sorts of services from property registration to grievance redressal. Still, challenges exist. The most significant barrier remains that of the digital divide in rural areas, where the technological infrastructure is very limited. Thus, most citizens are still left relying on traditional methods to get into government services, which undermines the overall effectiveness of e-governance initiatives. The way to bridge these disparities remains an investment in digital infrastructure as well as training programs aimed at ensuring that all citizens can participate fully in this digital governance landscape. Technology-driven reforms in Indian states have brought about significant improvements in the efficiency of bureaucracy and citizen engagement. These initiatives have empowered citizens by making services easily accessible and increasing transparency, thus making government operations effective. However, there is a continued need to overcome the problems existing in the system and make the benefits of digital governance reach all segments of society.

Challenges in Implementing Bureaucratic Reforms and Strategies for Sustainable Efficiency

State governments of India face extreme challenges in implementing bureaucratic reforms toward achieving sustainable administrative efficiency. The leading issue is the interference of politics, which threatens bureaucratic neutrality and causes inefficiency. As such, the bureaucrats, to some extent, follow political agendas and not an agenda of effective governance, thus causing a deficiency of accountability and transparency in such bureaucratic regimes. Corruption is also still prevalent, eroding trust in public institutions and undermining the effectiveness of reforms. Bureaucratic inertia is another significant barrier, characterized by resistance to change and adherence to established procedures, often referred to as red tape. This rigidity slows down decision-making processes and can result in significant delays in service delivery. The Indian bureaucracy follows a hierarchical structure, and coordination among different departments of government is difficult, which leads to fragmented efforts and overlapping responsibilities that increase inefficiencies. The lack of skilled personnel is also quite a challenge. Most state governments face understaffing, especially at the middle and senior levels, impacting their ability to implement reforms well. Reports suggest that a significant proportion of government posts remain unfilled, putting more pressure on the already existing staff and delaying important administrative work. For example, at the end of 2018, the Central Bureau of Investigation reported a manpower shortage of 22 percent, which indicated a problem in the system within the bureaucratic structure. To overcome such problems, several proposals can be made. Targeting skill improvement in bureaucrats through well-timed, strategically framed training programs would serve them for dealing effectively with the demands of the present world and future. Mission Karmayogi, focused upon developing the efficiency of bureaucracies through training should have such further improvements which include more developed and inclusive skill development. Then comes the environment that facilitates transparency and accountability. Bringing effective anti-corruption mechanism together with e-governance policies may help in simplification and reduction of corruption at multiple levels. For instance, digital platforms for service delivery can reduce human intervention and enhance

citizen engagement. Third, decentralization promotion can empower local governments and enhance responsiveness to citizen needs. By devolving power and decision-making authority to local bodies, state governments can reduce bureaucratic bottlenecks and enhance service delivery. Finally, citizen participation in governance can help align bureaucratic efforts with public expectations. Feedback mechanisms and participation of the people at every step in formulating policies ensure reforms more closely answer to people's needs. Several bureaucratic reforms seem daunting for Indian state governments, strategic capacity building initiatives that are characterized by greater transparency, decentralization, and citizens' involvement can open avenues toward sustained administrative efficiency.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

1. The transition to an autonomous civil service after 1947 marked a pivotal shift toward professional governance, enabling a more accountable and efficient administrative structure in independent India.
2. The major reform efforts involved the establishment of the Administrative Reforms Commission in 1966, which had the objective of improving the efficiency and accountability of the Indian bureaucracy.
3. The Right to Information Act was enacted in 2005, which further empowered citizens, significantly enhancing the transparency and allowing greater access by the public to the information and decision-making processes within the government.
4. The Digital India Initiative promotes e-governance and digital service delivery, leading to substantial improvements in bureaucratic efficiency by streamlining processes and reducing delays in service provision.
5. CPGRAMS has improved grievance Redressal processes, increasing citizen interaction with the bureaucracy and providing speedy answers to public complaints.
6. Reform measures taken on various fronts have led to a culture of transparency within public administration, bringing corruption down to a significant level and, in turn, building citizen confidence.
7. The use of technology in administrative procedures streamlined the operations, improved services, and made it convenient and efficient for citizens interacting with government agencies.
8. The reforms driven by technology enhanced communication between citizens and government agencies, thus promoting participation in governance by increasing citizen involvement in decision making.
9. Resistance to change is one of the most significant barriers to the effective implementation of reforms across various states, which prevents the progress towards improved bureaucratic efficiency and responsiveness.
10. Inadequate technological infrastructure continues to be a hindrance in the full realization of e-governance initiatives in many regions, limiting access to digital services and modern administrative practices.
11. It is crucial for bureaucratic organizations to create a culture of innovation in overcoming the resistance of change to provide continuous improvement in the mechanism of service delivery and administration.
12. It is important that civil servants continuously undergo training and development so that the bureaucracy may become relevant and efficient, adjusting to the new technology and methodologies introduced.
15. To achieve lasting improvements in administrative

efficiency, state governments must address systemic challenges and commit to ongoing reform efforts.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study on bureaucratic reforms in Indian states has deep policy implications in terms of improving governance, formulation of policies, and citizen engagement. Policymaking involves evidence-based policy design that enhances administrative efficiency, transparency, and accountability. State-level decision making and government responses find place through system-specific reforms tailored to bridge gaps in technology, capacity, and service delivery. The research findings strengthen governance by fostering citizen-centric approaches, thus increasing public trust and satisfaction with government services. Efficient administration, therefore, fosters economic growth through the reduction of bureaucratic delay, ease of doing business, and welfare delivery. Extending theoretical knowledge, this study integrates various frameworks in this paper such as Weberian bureaucracy, NPM, and TAM that deepen understanding of bureaucratic reforms in the Indian context. It provides practical recommendations to overcome challenges such as institutional inertia and digital divides, offering adaptable strategies for deploying technology-driven reforms. The study aligns bureaucratic reforms with broader sustainable development goals, ensuring equitable access to services and resources. The research serves as a valuable resource for rethinking and re-engineering governance systems to meet modern challenges effectively.

CONCLUSION

Bureaucratic reforms in India have greatly improved the administrative efficiency of all states and represent an important evolution of governance practices. Historically, the inadequacies of the colonial administrative structure formed the impetus for reform, including major milestones such as the 1966 creation of the Administrative Reforms Commission and more subsequent efforts to modernize public administration. These reforms have mainly focused on enhancing transparency and accountability within the bureaucracy. There have been significant initiatives like the Right to Information Act of 2005 and citizen charters. Specific reform initiatives have proven effective in different states. For example, e-governance has streamlined procedures and made services more accessible, thus reducing red tape in bureaucratic procedure. Programs like Digital India have enabled technological reformations that enhance citizen engagement and improve service delivery. Adoption of platforms like CPGRAMS has greatly improved the mechanisms of grievance Redressal, showing commitment towards responsive governance. Although these are positive developments, it is still a challenge to implement bureaucratic reforms with these issues: political interference, bureaucratic inertia, and the shortage of skilled personnel. Removing barriers requires such strategies as building capacity through targeted training programs and creating a culture of transparency and accountability. The role of bureaucratic reforms in making Indian states more administratively efficient is multifaceted and ongoing. Historically, considerable advance has been made through reforms in this area and technology-based initiatives, but overcoming the challenges prevalent today requires sustained efforts. By focusing on capacity building, transparency, and citizen participation, state governments can ensure sustainable administrative efficiency amid the needs of a dynamic society.

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