Assessment of the Civil Service - Selection and Training

What is the issue?

- Senior civil servants assume leadership positions right after they join, but the testing criteria is far from assessing the skill required for the role.
- In this context, here is an assessment of the priorities and challenges in the civil services at the selection and training phases.

What are the present drawbacks?

- There has so far been no concerted or sustained effort to manage senior civil service in a comprehensive manner.
- The steps have been only ad hoc in nature; the lateral recruitment is also one such effort.
- What really needs to be done is to look at -
    i. the manner in which recruitment takes place
    ii. the in-service training, transfers, assessment of officers
    iii. incentives and disincentives

What should the selection priorities be?

- Almost all the IAS officers occupy leadership positions right from the beginning of their careers.
- Even in the Secretariat jobs, each officer has to lead a team.
- Hence, the objective should be to select such persons who have leadership qualities or have the potential to become leaders.
- A leader, in this context, has to be able to build a team and carry it along with her/him by motivating those working with him.
- S/he has to excel in communication skills beyond the written one.
- S/he has to be ethical in behaviour with a positive attitude.

How is the selection at present?

- Most of the above requirements are not tested at the time of recruitment.
- The entrance exams primarily select brilliant individuals by testing written communication skills, some analytical skills and general awareness.
- It tests the examinees capability to “crack” the exam, and various coaching institutes assist them in doing so.
- But a leader requires much more than that.

What is to be done?

- **Recruitment** - The tools to assess the above discussed skills which are in use in the private sector and elsewhere in the world should be adopted.
- **Training** - The officers have knowledge and they are capable of acquiring more of it.
- What is required is the transformation of attitude as an officer, the necessity and utility of ethical behaviour.
- Given the high maximum age of entry into the civil service, this process becomes difficult and challenging.
- In this line, the training should be centered around inculcating leadership skills.
- It has to be focused on imparting skills and attitude that would enable the officer to evolve as a leader.
- Periodic upgradation of skills and learning from each other should be the focus of in-service training.
- This is imperative in the context of a fast-changing world both in terms of technology and management.
- **Certainty** - The inclination and aptitude of the officer needs to be monitored to determine his/her postings and assignments.
- Once assigned a task, he/she should be left to deliver.
- Frequent transfers interrupt the implementation process and leaves way for politicisation of bureaucracy.
- An agency, like the UPSC, can be assigned to prepare a panel from which the government can select an officer.

Source: Business Line

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