Challenges for Public Service Capacity and the Role of Public Employee Training as a Moderator in India

Lina Vyas, Chan Su Jung & Ahmed Shafiqul Huque

Abstract

This article examines the efforts made in India for the capacity building of public service. It addresses the negative influences, which the existing majority–minority divide, quota system, and the issue of corruption have on capacity building in the public sector and examines the moderating role played by public service training arrangements in capacity building. Mixed method is used and data are taken from survey and interviews with public officials. Findings show that efforts to accommodate the minority in the public services, quota system, and corruption harm the capacity-building initiative of the Indian central government. However, training can assist capacity building by serving as a moderator for accommodating diverse groups between competing needs in the pluralistic Indian society. Hence, improvement of training quality and effectiveness are expected to ensure that public servants are aware of the rules and that their applications possess the ability to tender relevant advice and assistance to the political executive. Furthermore, the findings may be used to draw insights about bureaucracy in other developing countries, although this study is based on efforts to build capacity in India.

Key words

Public service capacity, training, majority–minority divide, quota system

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INTRODUCTION

Debates and controversies abound regarding the role of bureaucracy in democratic systems, mainly due to the fact that bureaucracy and democracy are perceived as antithetical concepts (Meier and O'Toole 2006; Morgeson 2005; Mosher 1968; Waldo 1977). A strong constitutional tradition has allowed India to utilize the expertise of bureaucracy to its advantage, while at the same time, it has succeeded in preventing it from usurping political authority.

India's claim to be the world's largest democracy may be disputed, but it cannot be denied that the country has adhered to the democratic route since independence, except for a brief period of emergency rule in the 1970s. India is one of the few developing countries that has achieved a relatively high level of institutional development and is able to sustain a democratic polity (Hardgrave and Kochanek 2008). The prospect of the success and sustainability of democracy in a large and multi-ethnic country like India gives rise to concerns. Dahl (1971: 76) believed that widespread poverty and illiteracy are anathema to a stable democracy, and Jain (2002: 3) similarly expressed apprehension regarding the prospect of democracy in India. In view of these limitations, the obvious issue of interest is the identification of stable national institutions that contribute to this outcome, and the Indian bureaucracy features prominently in this aspect.

However, India continues to face challenges in its capacity to incorporate bureaucracy in the power structure for effective governance. The process of capacity building needs to be examined against this background to obtain an insight into the role of bureaucracy in serving the citizens and the state in India. Despite low levels of literacy and human development, vast social divisions, and a massive population, the country has remained relatively stable and successful. This success can be attributed to the capacity of the public service.

This study explores the methods and mechanisms for improving the capacity of the Indian public service. One of the central roles of the government is to develop strategies for the improvement of public services (Walker and Boyne 2006). Among the main tools for ensuring the improvement of capacity of public service in a large and diverse country like India is to integrate the various groups into the administrative and policy framework and motivate them to participate in the governing process. Greater participation in the policy-making process and in the program implementation enhances the governance networks, which, in the end, contributes to social cohesion and democracy (Klijn and Skelcher 2007; Peters 2010). Training activities have been assumed to be the logical site for capacity-building interventions in an implicit way; Grindle and Hilderbrand (1995) later affirmed that training can and should be used to inculcate desirable organizational norms and performance expectation. Training is the key strategy for continuous improvement, (Berman 2006) and its contributions appear at the individual level, via assisting employees in accepting new values and designs (Jreisat 1997; Schraeder et al. 2004). In any developing country, where its public administration is evolving and its public service capacity is to be improved, the

importance of training must be determined and utilized. However, few empirical studies on the relationship between capacity building of public service and training activities in India have been undertaken.

The article moves on from the existing policies and practices of recruiting, training, and motivating the public service and examines the essential factors and challenges to build a competent bureaucracy. Basically, attention was paid to the policies that intended to increase diversity of the population, in terms of ethnics and castes, in public service. Nonetheless, they adversely entrenched the corruption and injustice in recruitment and, consequently, undermined the public service capacity. Such policies include majority–minority divide, quota system, and corruption, per se. Mixed methodology is adopted in this empirical study to examine the impact of the above-mentioned policies and training quality on public service capacity in India. Data are drawn from a survey of in-service civil servants (238 in-depth interviews with twenty-seven officers, retired officers, and leaders of political parties). These semi-structured interviews aided interpretation of our statistical model, thereby enhancing the importance of this research.

Our findings show that in the respondents' perception, majority–minority divide, quota system, and corruption have negative impacts on public service capacity, while training not only ameliorates such impacts but also contributes to the capacity building.

PUBLIC SERVICE CAPACITY

The building blocks of effective or good capacity can be divided into three aspects: state, policy, and administrative (Painter 2000). The first two capacities involve not only the government but also the social and economic power. Administrative capacity, however, refers to the efficient management of the human and physical resources required for delivering the outputs of government (Painter 2000). Public services are closely connected to government performance and, to some extent, to the results of administrative capacity building. The concept of public service capacity can be understood as the combination of both professional knowledge and a delivery system with 'the ability to perform appropriate tasks effectively, efficiently, and sustainably' (Grindle and Hilderbrand 1995: 445). No government would survive the day with a broken institutional and legitimacy capacity in public service and administration and, thus, revitalization and deinstitutionalization of public service and administration is imperative (Farazmand 2009).

Building public service capacity has been discussed widely in studies on public administration and development. Public service capacity can be categorized into three levels. The first and basic level is the individual level of capacity, where skills and knowledge are imparted for the primary purpose of fulfilling job requirements and duties. The second is institutional-level capacity. Institutions refer to specific organizations or arrangements as the framework to aggregate individual capacities that help achieve goals is beyond the capability of the individual. The third is related to the whole

society. At this level, all segments of the citizens who subscribe to various values are brought together through networking and cohesion. Public service capacity can help coordinate and allocate resources by considering the interdependent relationships between different groups. All three levels are equally important and mutually inter-dependent (Lopes and Theisohn 2003: 4044). Tasks of building public service capacity are determined by the necessity, history, or situation in specific contexts (Grindle and Hilderbrand 1997; Nunberg 1996). This article will focus on the first and second levels of public service capacity and discuss how the Indian government could sustain an enabling environment to build public service capacity.

PUBLIC SERVICE IN INDIA

The Indian public service has a long history. With the birth of the Indian National Congress in 1885, the British colonial power highly demanded more well-educated and expert Indians in the civil service. As a result, the curriculum was broadened, and a parallel examination was arranged in India from 1922. Later, at the time of the transfer of power, nearly half of the members in the Indian Civil Service (ICS) were Indians (Kohli 2001a: 9). After independence, the ICS was retained in the form of two services, the Central Services and the All-India Services, which included the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and the Indian Police Service (IPS). The IAS was constructed in consis-tence with the principle of politics-administration dichotomy and the cadre. This system was expected to help develop a national outlook, to recruit the best and the brightest in the country, and to create a sense of independence and impartiality (Radin 2007).

India is a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious polity. Though Hindus are in a majority of the whole population in India (about 80.5 per cent), Muslims, as the primary minority (13.4 per cent), comprise a large portion of the Indian population (Ministry of Home Affairs 2005). The country actually has the third largest Muslim population in the world (Oomen 1997). Seeking to eradicate the fears of majority hegemony, the first Prime Minister of independent India, Jawaharlal Nehru, tried to provide special status to the minorities, which is reflected in the *Article 29* and *30* in the *Constitution of India*, in the sense of protecting and promoting minority rights and interests. There are programs aimed at facilitating education to enhance their chances of joining the public service. The government encourages providing minorities with access to public service and they are being included in the political and administrative process for the minority. Such special status resulted in a unique majority–minority divide phenomenon in India.

The 'quota system' co-occurs with the majority–minority divide; nevertheless, it does not only serve the minority alone but the castes as well. One peculiar phenom-enon in India is that the family background, or more precisely the social class of origin, matters in every aspect of social life (Verma 2005). People from noble families are more likely to be recruited as bureaucrats than those of humble origins. The quota system was supposed to alleviate the convention and ensure representation of deprived

groups in the public services. Simply put, the quota system is the reservation of positions. Distribution of posts in the public service is manipulated under the criteria of caste, gender, State of Domiciles, and other criteria. The Indian Law supports the quota system, for it is claimed to enhance social diversity by disenfranchising the privileges of *some* groups in the recruitments, while maintaining a proper proportion of recruits for the general population.

We must clarify further the distinctions between the quota system and majority–minority divide. First, while the majority–minority divide is a natural consequence of the composition of a country on the basis of ethnic, religious, or linguistic identities, the quota system is a purely manipulated mechanism. Kaushik (1993) defined the quota system in India as representation for scheduled castes and tribes, which has led to caste wars. The quota system caters for recognized minorities and is used to help them gain positions and status in the society.

Although these policies were implemented with the aim to ensure representative bureaucracy in the Indian public organizations, their 'accomplishments' did not turn out as expected. We illuminate the results from two aspects. First, the theory of representative bureaucracy, which suggests that organizations perform better if their workforces reflect the characteristics of their constituent population (HM Government 1995, 2000; Mosher 1982), is questionable. Andrews et al.'s (2005) study on English local government proves that more ethnic diversity relative to the surrounding population is negatively associated with consumer perceptions of performance. Prior to this research, scholars argued that simply diversifying bureaucrats without organizational strategy may yield null or even negative service outcomes in public service (Richard et al. 2003; Tsui et al. 1992). In India, where the organizational strategy in public service is not sophisticated, representative bureaucracy, at its best, would not contribute too much to capacity building. On the other hand, the majority–minority divide is a manifestation of religious differences, which often offer the minority political, social, or economic gains. The politicians often take benefit of this religious difference to win votes. For the time when it is not possible to manipulate or reconfigure the majority–minority divide, actions can be taken to design quota systems to suit politicians' needs by integrating whoever they favour into the mainstream of public service.

Reviewing the policies of majority–minority divide and the quota system, one may be impressed by the ways political parties may utilize the bureaucratic system to gain powers. But it is not the end. ICS officers who hold permanent positions are expected to contribute their expertise and knowledge to the government and ensure continuity in public policies with a completely non-partisan stance. However, in a formal sense, the reporting relationship between the bureaucracy and its political supervisors can be undermined easily by collusion between officials in the form of 'political return' or 'political favour' (Goetz and Jenkins 2001). The Second Administrative Reforms Commission (2008), also known as the Moily Commission, observed:

> While some public servants did not render objective and impartial advice to their Ministers, often some Ministers began to resent advice that did not fit in with short-term political interests. There was also a tendency for some Ministers at the Union and the State levels to focus more on routine administrative matters such as transfers in preference to policy making. At the same time, some public servants learnt the art of 'manoeuvring' for favours in return for pliability in their decision making. This trend was further accentuated by rising materialism and acquisitiveness in society as well as decline in values across the board. (Second Administrative Reforms Commission 2008: 186)

Provided this situation continues, one possible result is the deterioration of already serious corruption, especially the political one. For instance, due to heavy expenses on elections, some candidates extract free loans and collect and accumulate large funds under questionable means (Guhan and Samuel 1997). Administrative corruption in every major organ of the Indian government is rampant because successful parties and candidates, especially the ruling party, attempt to recover the election costs. Another prominent example of political corruption is the allocation of irrigation water in Southern India (Wade 1982). Upstream farmers offered payoffs to public officials, leaving little or no water for the downstream farmers, even for subsistence farming. Some ditches ran dry before the end of the system was reached. Hence, corrupt payments for the best plots favour the more well-to-do and those with connections to the officials administering the programme (Rose-Ackerman 1999). Considering the level of corruption, it is not surprising that the level of public satisfaction with public services remains low in India (Haque 2005).

India has faced a number of challenges in building public service capacity. High population growth, discrepancies between urban and rural areas, complex cultural identities, religious and linguistic divide, and other factors have made public service capacity building immensely difficult. Hardgrave and Kochanek (2008: 3) summarized the state of India's development in the following way:

> Quantitatively, in terms of levels of urbanization, industrialization, secularization, education, media consumption, and welfare, India appeared to be almost a stereotype of less-developed country (LDC) and lack of alleged socioeconomic requisites for democracy. Yet, qualitatively, India has a comparatively high level of institutional development and is one of the few nations in the Third World to sustain a democratic polity.' The Second Administrative Reforms Commission commented that 'only five per cent (IAS officers) of the nearly four million employees of the government decide the policy environment in India. (Second Administrative Reforms Commission 2008: 180)

How can one develop public service capacity under these conditions? India's solution is compulsory training for civil servants. The *National Training Policy*, implemented in 1996, proscribes that all civil servants shall receive induction training at time of entry into service and in-service training at suitable intervals in their career. Attendance in training programs is a mandatory exercise with possible linkages with career progression. Training is essential for building public service capacity. Grindle and Hilderbrand

(1995: 445) state that public service capacity ranges from the narrowest perspective, which equates capacity with the training of human resources, to the broadest view that equates capacity with organizational development. From a macroscopic view, the bureaucratic system in India is surrounded by various power or interest struggles. Radical changes are unlikely to occur directly at institutional levels. In the light of the narrowest perspective, individuals are seen as the minimum units of public service. Organizations ultimately learn via their individual members (Kim 2004); therefore, one possible alternative for Indian public service is building capacity at the individual level and, afterwards, transforming it to the organizational level. Training here is a learning instrument of great importance.

HYPOTHESES

Following the introduction of the status quo in the Indian public service system, the hypotheses were built upon these observations, namely majority–minority divide, quota system, corruption, public service training, and capacity building of public service.

As described above, in spite of the privilege in the ethnics, majority–minority divide would help the minority to integrate themselves into the mainstream, unanticipated side effects arose simultaneously (Misra 2000). Specifically, the special provisions offered to the minorities, mainly Muslims and the *dalits* were fertile grounds for political influence which the politicians coveted. That could be the reason for the Congress Party turning a blind eye to the conflicts and hostility between Hindus (majority) and Muslims (minority) in order not to lose the Muslim electoral support (Misra 2000). The Muslims demanded an increase of ratio in reservation and representation of minorities in the ICS. Now that the ruling parties have appeased the minorities, India became a country, probably the only one, where majorities shrink from the minorities. Thus, we postulate that the imbalance between Hindus and Muslims, in terms of political influence, undermines the neutrality of bureaucracy and erodes the public service capacity.

Hypothesis 1: Majority–minority divide has a negative influence on public service capacity.

The quota system, from a long-term perspective, represents another shield of privileges – caste privileges. In higher education institutions funded by the central government, 22.5 per cent of available posts in the public service are reserved for Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) students. This reservation percentage has risen to 49.5 per cent by including an additional 27 per cent reservation for the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) (Sekhri 2011). According to the 2001 census, however, a larger part of the Indian population does not fall under the categories of SCs, STs, or OBCs (Ministry of Home Affairs 2005). Furthermore, the candidates for reserved positions can be considered only in their respective categories and are not allowed to

join the general category candidates (Yadav 2006). No matter the intention with which the quota system was implemented, the majority of the population competes for the small number of post openings, while small groups are still favoured with adequate reverse discrimination. Article 16(4) in the Constitution of India states that 'provision for reservation in matters of promotion to any class or classes of posts, in the services under the state in favour of scheduled caste and schedule tribe' (Sharma 2005: 36). The inequality is embedded in the first place, and the importance of merits is undermined. Under such circumstances, we doubt whether the recruits, who consist of the foundation of public service capacity, the aforementioned individual level of capacity, are competent.

> *Hypothesis 2: The maintenance of the quota system has a negative influence on public service capacity.*

Corruption is a form of 'incapacity' whereby bureaucrats extract illegal payments from others in society (Huber and McCarty 2004). Amundsen (1999) classifies corruption into two types by observing the direction of the flows of resources: either from the society to the state (extractive corruption, or corruption form above), or from the state to the society (redistributive corruption, or corruption from below). Corruption hurts public service capacity in the sense that unity and coherence of the state and its policies will be ruined, and the policy implementation capacity ravaged. Amundsen (1999) further points out that the state and its regulating capacity is the loser of 'redistributive' corruption, which renders the state incapacitated and politically impotent, eroding its capacity to extract taxes and render public services, and destroying its ability to implement coherent policies, to execute rational development policies and to transform the society and the economy according to political priorities.

Some politicians may take advantage of their political power for their personal benefits by placing certain bureaucrats that they favour into particular positions while moving the unfavourable ones to other positions. This form of controlled appointments in the bureaucracy – influencing the posting arrangements of public employees – is one of the consequences of political power and corruption, which can diminish public service capacity and, in turn, distort policy outcomes due to public goods distortion (Allern et al. 2011; Besley and Persson 2009; Tambulasi 2007). One obvious failed example is the Citizen's Charter, which aims to ensure the delivery of services based on quality, promptness, transparency, and customer choice, confined to a great scale due to collusion and corruption in the public service system (Haque 2005).

> *Hypothesis 3: Corruption has a negative impact on public service capacity.*

Is there any antidote against the 'failing' public service? Training is seen as a proper solution. Training contributes to public sector capacity in many ways. Particularly in India, it has the potential to minimize the problems caused directly or indirectly by the

majority–minority divide and the quota system, since training is widely regarded as the most popularly prescribed remedy for curing organizational ills (Ozgediz 1983). Training of public service personnel helps to enhance the quality by imparting the required skills and competence to civil servants and building up confidence in their work (Berman et al. 2010: 277). When these civil servants are trained and aware of their responsibilities, the risk of political influence in decision-making and policy implementation can be reduced. The civil servant recruited as a result of political favours through majority–minority divide initiatives easily arouse public indignation and possibly their ability is questioned (Kohli 2001). The quota system, on the other hand, is criticized for the disproportion of post openings between groups and its intention to preserve caste privileges (Kohli 2001; *The Economist* 2006). Capacities of the recruits from each group are uneven. Via training programs, however, these recruits receive formal education and exercises and become more or less competent in their work. The queries could be dispelled if administrative decisions on allocation of services were proved to be made by a well-trained group of public service personnel. Training assists these civil servants to acquire a higher set of skill and a clear sense of professional responsibility (Berman 2006). Furthermore, a public servant training system fosters a perception that civil servants work for the public interest rather than for any political party's interest. Training programs also help to strengthen civil servants' awareness and commitment towards the policies and systems of the state they serve.

> *Hypothesis 4: Training quality has the potential to reduce the negative influences of majority–minority divide, quota system, and corruption on public administration service capacity.*

DATA

This study uses mixed methodology to interpret and understand the impact of the majority–minority divide, quota system, corruption, and training quality on public service capacity in India.

Quantitative analysis was conducted by developing a questionnaire consisting of fourteen items to measure the independent and dependent variables. We conducted the quantitative research by sending questionnaires to IAS officers who were participating in the in-service training program at the National Training Institute, Lal Bhadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA), and came from multiple agencies of the Indian central government. All of them have undertaken induction training and were receiving in-service training at different stages of their career. In all, 394 questionnaires were sent out, and 283 valid responses were received (a response rate of 71.8 per cent). This includes employees from different regions and levels. We complemented the survey with information gathered through interviews with the respondents from October 2010 to January 2011. In terms of gender, 67 and 33 per cent of the respondents were males and females, respectively. Their ages were divided

into 10 categories: 21–24 (1per cent), 25–29 (4 per cent), 30–34 (9 per cent), 35–39 (19 per cent), 40–44 (24 per cent), 45–49 (21 per cent), 50–54 (10 per cent), 55–59 (10 per cent), 60–64 (1 per cent), and 65 or above (1 per cent). Education levels of the respondents had four categories: Higher diploma (2 per cent), undergraduate degree (38 per cent), post-graduate degree (53 per cent), and doctorate degree (7 per cent).

The qualitative analysis is based on in-depth interviews. We reviewed the political system and bureaucracy of India first, followed by the key factors that affected the capacity of the public service. This helped to build and later explain the hypotheses of the study. We used snowball sampling to gather primary qualitative information using open-ended, in-depth structured interviews with seventeen in-service, five retired IAS officers, and four leaders of political parties. This number is not big considering the total number of IAS officers in India, because it is difficult to get access to government officials and politicians in India. Access became more challenging in the context of various terrorist attacks in India since 2008 and the sensitive security situation in the country. These interviewees held important positions in the public service of India. The interviewed IAS officers either worked in New Delhi or were trainers at the Lal Bhadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA). Two of the in-service officers were appointed under the quota system. The interviews allowed the respondents to choose 'the dimensions of the question they want to answer' (Marton 1986: 42) and reflected their understanding and thoughts, which are conceptual and experiential (Marton 1981: 181).

MEASUREMENT

The dependent variable, '*public service capacity*', is reflected in the response to two questions: 'How would you rate the overall capacity of Public Service in India?' and 'How would you evaluate the overall quality of public employees' skills and knowledge in India?' These items are scaled from 1 (very bad or very low) to 5 (very good or very high). The reliability coefficient was .856.

The main independent variables that may affect public service capacity were extrapolated from data obtained through qualitative research, such as importance of quota system, majority–minority divide, and corruption. Appendix 1 presents details, including questionnaire items and reliability coefficients for each measure. The questionnaire items for the independent variables used 5-Likert scales from 1 (e.g. strongly disagree or highly dissatisfied) to 5 (e.g. strongly agree or highly satisfied). The measure of training quality combined two items from the survey: 'How satisfied are you with the quality of the current training program of IAS?' and 'Are you satisfied with the frequency of assessments of training of IAS?' (Cronbach's $\alpha = .724$). A single-item measure was used for public employees' perception of importance of quota system: 'Do you agree that the reservation policy of India is a contributor in the success of democracy?' Public employees' perception of majority–minority divide was measured by combining the following two items: 'Do you

agree that a majority–minority divide has existed in India?' and 'Do you agree that a solution on majority–minority divide is required in India?' (Cronbach's $\alpha = .739$). The measure of corruption on public employees' work was the combination of two items: 'Do you agree that politicians take undue advantage of their power to attain their personal motives?' and 'Do you agree that public employees' smooth working is influenced by politicians?' (Cronbach's $\alpha = .837$).

Since all the key independent and dependent variables were measured from the same survey data, we examined the possibility of common-method bias, using Harman's (1976) one-factor test. We conducted an unrotated factor analysis, the results of which indicated that the common-source bias did not affect our findings; the questionnaire items for the variables were not combined into one single factor; the biggest factor explained approximately 32 per cent of the variance. In addition, as control variables, this study included gender, age, education level, and public employees' perception of accountability system in the Indian government.

RESULTS

Table 1 presented descriptive statistics and correlations of the main independent and dependent variables. The correlation analysis illustrated that there is no strong correlation between the main independent variables. The strongest correlation, .25, was between quota system and majority–minority divide. Public service capacity was positively correlated with training quality but negatively correlated with quota system and corruption. Majority–minority divide did not show a statistically significant correlation with public service capacity. However, majority–minority divide had a statistically significant and negative correlation with public service capacity ($r = -.11$, $p < .05$) in a partial correlation analysis. The reason for insignificant positive correlation between majority–minority divide and public service capacity in the zero-order correlation analysis could be that majority–minority divide had a statistically significant correlation with training quality, quota system, and accountability system, as shown in Table 2.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics and correlations of the dependent and independent variables

	Mean	Min	Max	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Public service capacity	6.80	2	10	(2.04)					
2. Training quality	6.22	2	10	.69***	(1.93)				
3. Quota system	2.68	1	5	−.37	−.17**	(1.41)			
4. Majority–minority divide	6.87	2	10	.02	.24***	.25***	(2.31)		
5. Corruption	7.66	2	10	−.28***	−.22**	.08	.10	(2.24)	
6. Accountability system	5.22	2	10	.25***	.45***	.12	.15*	−.25***	(2.02)

Note: ***$p < .001$; **$p < .01$; *$p < .05$; Standard deviations in parentheses.

Table 2: Hierarchical ordinal logistic regression results for challenges, training, and public service capacity

| | Dependent variable = Public service capacity | | | | | | | | |
| | Model 1 | | | Model 2 | | | Model 3 | | |
Independent variables	Coefficient	SE	Odds ratio	Coefficient	SE	Odds ratio	Coefficient	SE	Odds ratio
Training quality				1.085***	0.098	2.959	0.635*	0.304	1.887
Quota system				−0.420***	0.094	0.657	−0.949**	0.289	0.387
Majority–minority divide				−0.126*	0.054	0.882	−0.527***	0.164	0.591
Corruption				−0.184**	0.056	0.832	0.043	0.202	1.044
Training quality × quota system							0.091*	0.045	1.096
Training quality × majority–minority divide							0.071**	0.026	1.074
Training quality × corruption							−0.035	0.029	0.965
Gender	−0.251	0.242	0.778	−0.028	0.254	0.972	0.014	0.26	1.014
Age	0.181**	0.064	1.198	0.07	0.07	1.073	0.114	0.072	1.121
Education	0.14	0.173	1.151	−0.196	0.19	0.822	−0.154	0.191	0.857
Accountability system	0.252***	0.059	1.286	−0.077	0.069	0.926	−0.074	0.07	0.929
Log likelihood	−492.498			−384.127			−377.626		
LR χ^2	30.17***			246.92***			259.92***		
McFadden's R^2	.030			.243			.256		
McFadden's ΔR^2				.213			.013		
Number of observations	283			283			283		

Note. ***$p < 0.001$; **$p < 0.01$; *$p < 0.05$; Odds ratio = factor change in odds for unit increase in an independent variable.

Hypotheses were tested using hierarchical ordinal logistic regression, since the dependent variable, public service capacity, was measured by combining two questionnaire items using ordinal responses. Three models were presented. Model 1 included just control variables. Model 2 added training quality and the main independent variables: quota system, majority–minority divide, and corruption. Model 3 included interactions between training quality and the three main independent variables.

Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3, which predicted the negative and direct effects of majority–minority divide, quota system, and corruption on public service capacity, respectively, were supported. As shown in Model 2, one unit increase in perception of majority–minority divide, quota system, and corruption increased the odds of reporting lower public service capacity by 12 per cent, 34 per cent, and 17 per cent, respectively.

These 3 hypotheses are also verified in our interviews. The IAS officers generally reflect negative attitudes towards the majority–minority divide. Some of them thought that the divide and rule policy should be corrected by implementing policies that alleviate these problems. Equal treatment to all citizens is of prime importance and the majority–minority divide is the main reason for communal differences that exist in India, and it hinders the efficient and sustainable performance of public employees. This view is similar to that of Kishwar (2005), who noticed the tendency of national political parties to use religious leaders and symbols for manipulating the vote bank as one of the reasons for the divide in India. Some IAS officials admitted that the political environment shaping the divide between the communities in India was largely a consequence of differences between various religious castes, historical legacies, and values.

Among these three variables, quota system showed the strongest negative effect on public service capacity. The interview results for this hypothesis also indicated that reverse discrimination under the quota system had a negative impact on public service capacity building. The findings indicated that the quota system in reservation policies did not help the most disadvantaged communities. The openness and fair competition in recruitment were undermined by the practice of reservation in the quota system. A senior IAS officer stated, 'Quota system has a negative impact on the overall efficiency of the public employees. The basis of inefficiency begins at the selection process where a candidate is selected at a much lower standard as compared to others who fall under the non-reservation group.' Another IAS officer shared a similar view, and observed, 'Incompetence of the public employees under the reserved quota system is seldom challenged as they are protected by law.' An interviewed officer appointed under the quota system shared that even though he had the opportunity to work in the government, his attempts were often underestimated and he was not accepted, which created an adverse situation and demotivated him. He also voiced that they were lacking in the area of professional growth.

Hypothesis 3 was also tested, and the independent variable shows negative impact on the capacity building. During the interviews, the interviewees explained further how

the political control has eroded the public service. Some senior officials commented, 'Public services are training candidates not for governance but for being subordinate to the political party in power. They have lost focus and are busy in serving the politicians and their political ambitions. The main reason is that the public servants are kept dependent on the ruling parties for their postings. Moreover, the politicians use the policy of rewards and punishment and the public servants abide by the dictates.' Another interviewee stated, 'Promotions and transfers to important positions and departments were the rewards for loyalty.'

For Hypothesis 4, the positive moderating effects of training quality were found with the relationships between majority–minority divide and public service capacity (odds ratio = 1.074, $p < .05$) and between quota system and public service capacity (odds ratio = 1.096, $p < .01$). Therefore, the positive coefficients of the interaction terms between training quality and majority–minority divide and between training quality and quota system suggest that the improvement of training quality can lead to decrease in the negative effects of majority–minority divide and quota system on public service capacity. That is, the results imply that improving training quality for public employees can be one of the potential strategies to relieve the negative influences of environmental or political obstacles, such as majority–minority divide and quota system on the enhancement of public service capacity in Indian governments. However, the impact of corruption, regardless of training quality or satisfaction, was not statistically significant in the data. In the interviews, several interviewees' remarks are consistent with these results. An officer chosen under the quota system added, 'Training emerges as a critical factor to build values and skills to enhance the capacity of officials who have not been selected on the basis of merit principle. Moreover, training helps public officials to think beyond the narrow differences based on caste and class and work toward a common goal.' Another civil servant held the view, 'The public employees have to face the real challenge and situations that they are subjected to, and thus are required to be well-versed with a workable approach to all situations.' Radin (2007: 1543) finds that many countries have identified specific skills necessary for the public employees, and they include 'public/private partnership, dealing with politicians, managing in networks and other forms of intergovernmental relationship …. Thus, strong capacity on the basis of appropriate and adequate training is the backbone of any logical and effective running of the government.' Both the statistics and qualitative results imply the importance of improving training quality and facilitating public employees' satisfaction with the training quality in the Indian central government, in addition to the direct effect of training quality or satisfaction.

DISCUSSION

The mixed analysis in this article shows that the majority–minority divide policies, quota system, and corruption over the bureaucracy resulted in negative influence on public service capacity, while training quality was considered as an essential element in

building public service capacity. Moreover, training quality shows the potential to reduce the negative influences of the majority–minority divide, quota system, and corruption on public administration service capacity.

Noticeable diversities created difficulties for civil servants since they are not assigned to the state where they come from, and thus may not be familiar with the region they govern. Casteism in India also carried the potential danger of conflicts and violence and a threat to the maintenance of peace and order. The quantitative analysis of this study showed that public officers recognize the negative influence of the majority–minority divide on effective public service.

The quota system eliminates the essence of quality, and resulted in a reduction of competitiveness amongst employees. The bureaucracy could ideally operate in three main spheres, including appointment and promotion in government services, admissions to public institutions, and seats in central, state, and local legislatures (Overseas Development Institute 2006). The representative nature of the bureaucracy could enhance opportunities for members from the socially disadvantaged classes to obtain employment in the public bureaucracy. In interviews, however, the civil servants placed the blame on politicians for encouraging this system in order to win minority votes. In fact, most of the interviewed public employees stated that the quota system is complex and restricts the selection of the right candidates. Some officials noted that employees who came from reserved quota were generally not accepted well by their peers in the training sessions, conferences, workshops, and other places of interaction. This is probably due to the lack of acceptance of minorities by the community at large.

Corruption remains a strong negative influence in the Indian public service, as evidenced from the above survey analysis. Civil servants at the central and regional levels have the responsibility of executing political programmes for the government, but there are weaknesses in the process of appointment managed by the Ministry of Personnel under the direct control of the Prime Minister. A political leader complained that no sequential body of knowledge is available to instruct political executives and public servants on how to deal with this critical relationship. Public service capacity is seriously affected since civil servants are concerned mainly with understanding the minister's interest and priorities, rather than the execution of their duties effectively and efficiently.

Training efforts are intimately linked with departmental goals, and human resources are treated as assets. The Moily Commission observed that the current system of training does not adequately reflect changes in the socio-economic scenario and the emerging new challenges and emphasized the need to expose public service trainees to management skills and anti-corruption practices (Second Administrative Reforms Commission 2008: 189). Thus, the practical aspects of public service jobs should be accorded more attention while designing training programs. A former Director of the LBSNAA commented:

India has many challenges, and it is the responsibility of the public employees to face the challenges and run the system. In this respect, capacity building of public employees should be an on-going process. Training on a regular basis, focusing on the all-round development of public officials at all ranks, is the sole pillar on which the successful running of the country lies.

This survey confirms that training contributes to public sector capacity in various ways and has potentials for reducing the adverse impacts of majority–minority divide, quota system, and of problems inherent in the political system of India. Training programs are reviewed and revised to keep abreast of developments and address discrepancies that arise from problems related to gender, caste, and the urban–rural divide. Moreover, when public officials are attentive to the requirements of their post, the means and methods for performing them, as well as their rights and responsibilities, the risk of political influence in their decisions and actions are reduced. Furthermore, the use of technology has enhanced the capacity of the civil service to improve the delivery of services and connect the population to the activities of the government. Increased awareness of the social, economic, and political realities has been achieved as a combination of these factors as well as the general quality of public servants who benefit from a sound system of education designed in contemporary India.

CONCLUSION

The four hypotheses postulated in this study emphasize the need to address critical issues in India. The issues were of minority–majority divide that exacerbated tension and conflicts amongst groups and communities and a quota system for recruitment to the public service that placed emphasis on identity rather than merit and competence. Political control over public administration has always been a contentious issue as decisions are influenced by political considerations rather than merit. The fourth hypothesis recognized training as an important component of public service capacity building, but there was more than that. Training ensures that public servants are aware of the rules and their application and possess the ability to tender relevant advice and assistance to the political executive. Rule-based institutions and their members are expected to neutralize the minority–majority divide and apply insight obtained from training to perform their tasks. Changes in the public service training will not be the sole factor that changes the way in which public servants behave. Capacity building requires the organizations and its employees to achieve objectives of the tasks. In addition to training, improving, and strengthening, the institutional and legal frame-work could help to build a forward-looking civil service.

Although the survey data were collected from the public employees from different parts of India, it does not suggest that the survey results are conclusive, generalizable, or applicable to depict the entire Indian government. Simultaneously, while this study is based on efforts to build capacity in India, the findings may be used to draw insights about

bureaucracy in other developing countries. Nonetheless, this study has some limitations. Both quantitative as well as qualitative analysis focused only on the officials who were receiving training at the National Training Institute, LBSNAA. This was considered to be the most available approach to get respondents of a fair mix from different departments and the best way to sample in a vast country like India. Along with the sampling issue, a survey-related bias called social desirability could still influence the survey findings: such bias could exist where respondents have tendency to respond to questions in a socially acceptable or desirable direction. That is, for questionnaire items in the survey that deal with personally or socially sensitive contents, some respondents such as public officials might report inaccurately so as to present themselves in the best possible position (Fisher 1993). Hence, each survey finding was combined with in-depth interviews with public officials including retired ones. Moreover, the numbers of interviews conducted are not many considering the total number of IAS officers in India. However, it must be acknowledged that getting access to senior elected and appointed officials is difficult in India. Additionally, one should not be surprised that civil servants hold those opinions in India and that the opinions are associated with perceived performance. That is, we took the dependent and independent variables from the same survey and this self-report method can produce percept–percept inflation in correlations (Crampton and Wagner 1994). Indeed, we should be concerned if these findings were not statistically significant. Hence, for more robust findings, future research needs to take dependent and independent variables from different archival data sources. Moreover, longitudinal research for further study concerning public service in different regions and at different levels of hierarchical structure could provide a more comprehensive view of public service capacity building in India.

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Appendix 1

Measurement Items for all Variables

Dependent variable

   Public service capacity (Cronbach's Alpha = .856)

• How would you rate the overall capacity of Public Service in India?

• How would you evaluate the overall quality of public employees' skills and knowledge in India?

Main independent variables

   Training quality (Cronbach's Alpha = .724)

• How satisfied are you with the training for your current job?

• Are you satisfied with the frequency of assessments of training? *Importance of quota system*

• Do you agree that the reservation policy of India is a contributor in the success of democracy?

   Majority–minority divide (Cronbach's Alpha = .739)

• Do you agree that majority–minority divide has existed in India?

• Do you agree that a solution on majority–minority divide is required in India?

   Corruption (Cronbach's Alpha = .837)

• Do you agree that politicians take undue advantage of their power to attain their personal motives?

• Do you agree that public employees' smooth working is influenced by politicians?

Controls

   Accountability system (Cronbach's Alpha = .707)

• How satisfied are you with accountability system of Indian government?

• Are you satisfied with the learning and training programs about the accountability system?

   Gender

• Are you a male or female?

   Age

• What is your age?

   Education

• What is your highest education received?